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**Gentrification and the Growth and Decline of LGBT  
Space in New York City**

**Rónan Vivian-Byrne**

## **Abstract**

The association between LGBT communities and gentrification has long been noted in academic literature. This study shows that the LGBT community had a significant role in the gentrification of neighbourhoods in New York City, particularly Greenwich Village, the East Village and Park Slope. It shows that, while bearing similarities, this community's role was substantively different from that of other demographics elsewhere in the same period. It shows that, rather than simply gay males being the critical actors, lesbian and transgender people were important, pointing to the heterogeneity of the community in this period. The development of communities in these neighbourhoods resulted in the expansion of political influence, and the cultural and social life of the wider community during the gay liberation movement and AIDS crisis. Neighbourhoods in which these communities developed experienced changes as a direct result. Efforts of LGBT people to make areas safer for themselves, as well as cleaner and more attractive, resulted in rising property values as a consequence. As gentrification accelerated in these neighbourhoods, it has increasingly been to the detriment of the same LGBT people that contributed to its early growth. This study analyses the significance of this development for the community and the identities founded and strengthened in these neighbourhoods. Thus, it states the importance of ensuring that the debate over the consequences of gentrification considers the significance of specific places for historically disempowered groups. It argues that with these communities, it is essential to consider more than just direct spatial displacement on the part of residents. Indeed, it is necessary to examine the broader consequences. Gentrification does not just threaten individuals in specific places, but entire communities for whom these neighbourhoods are repositories of symbolic meaning and collective memories.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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## **Introduction**

In 1980, Jimmy Wright, a gay artist from Kentucky bought a house in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, having been unable to afford to buy something his preferred SoHo. Describing the surrounding area at the time as looking “like a war”, Wright still felt New York City, and Manhattan more specifically, was where he belonged. He saw it as a place where he could live in his “own skin”. Over the years of living there, Wright and his partner renovated the house out of their own pocket, with the area being redlined at the time, and lobbied the city government to improve the provision of services to the area.<sup>1</sup> Thirty years later, Wright found himself fighting legal battles against developers building a luxury hotel next door to him, but was keen to stay despite the market value of his property having rocketed in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Wright’s story encapsulates many aspects of the story of gentrification in New York City during the 1980s and 90s. As an artist and a gay man, Wright forms part of two of the most cited demographics in ‘first-wave’ gentrification, that sanitises previously dilapidated areas of the city, inadvertently laying the ground-work for the ‘second-wave’ luxury developers that move in later and threaten the first wave.<sup>3</sup> Wright, however, also exemplifies how the LGBT community has a unique position in this process.<sup>4</sup> As a homeowner, he is positioned to make a significant financial gain from selling his property, but because of the benefits living in the neighbourhood has had for him as a gay man, he is not willing to do so. This shows that for many

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<sup>1</sup> On redlining: T. J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 43-47; B. Satter, 'Reflections: On Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America', *Reviews in American History*, 41 (2013), pp. 178-79; N. Smith, 'Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 45 (1979), pp. 544-45.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wright, 'Interview with Jimmy Wright', int. by T. Elkin, NYPL Community Oral History Project, Lower East Side Oral History Project, (December 18, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> D. Spain, 'Gender and Urban Space', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40 (2014), p. 591; A. Shkuda, *The Lofts of SoHo: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950-1980*, (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 1; P. L. Clay, 'The Mature Revitalized Neighborhood: Emerging Issues in Gentrification', in *The Gentrification Reader*, ed. by E. Wyly, L. Lees, and T. Slater (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> The term “LGBT Community” is anachronistic in much of this history, however has been used to make clear that this study considers the impact of the full community that it describes today, rather than just that of gay men. The study also shows that at many times this ‘community’ was pluralistic, and did not act in a unified way. Nonetheless, the study considers the impact of the full community as it is considered now across the breadth of the history of gentrification in New York in this period.

in the community, gentrification is not merely a material process, but one with significant symbolic implications.

The LGBT community, especially gay men, has long been associated with gentrification. Within New York City, the community has a historic connection with Greenwich Village; the neighbourhood long dominated by Catholic immigrants. This grew after the Stonewall Uprising of 1969, considered widely to be the start of the mass movement for gay liberation in the USA.<sup>5</sup> Later, the 1980s and 1990s saw the community grow in neighbourhoods elsewhere in the city, notably in Park Slope in Brooklyn, and the East Village in Manhattan, as LGBT people sought places away from the increasingly gentrifying Greenwich Village.<sup>6</sup> LGBT involvement differs from other demographics associated with gentrification, as migration to particular places in the city often had political and cultural urgency motivated by the discrimination faced by the community. This contrasts with demographics for which it was more a search for “authentic places” in reaction to the “perceived blandness and conventions of suburban mass society”.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is necessary to study the association between the community and gentrification in order to reveal the many complexities, for example its impact on the spatiality of identity and politics, of the process.

For members of the LGBT community, the creation of gay neighbourhoods, or “gayborhoods”, in cities like New York often represented a unique opportunity.<sup>8</sup> Spatial concentration, and the resulting expansion of amenities and services friendly to LGBT people allowed greater freedom to openly explore and express different sexualities and identities without the same fear of violence or social exclusion felt elsewhere. They also provided a platform from which to consolidate political power for the purposes of furthering the gay

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<sup>5</sup> T. J. Shelley, 'Catholic Greenwich Village: Ethnic Geography and Religious Identity in New York City, 1880-1930', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 89 (2003); J. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 1; C. Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 250.

<sup>6</sup> T. Rothenberg, "'And She Told Two Friends': Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space", in *Mapping Desire*, ed. by D. Bell and G. Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> S. Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 210-11.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 3.

rights movement, especially prevalent during the AIDS crisis.<sup>9</sup> As a result, residential displacement of these communities, as well as the general reshaping of these neighbourhoods, draws attention to the negative effects of gentrification on areas that are of symbolic significance to a particular community.

As Harlem and other neighbourhoods begin to gentrify, there is concern about the impact it will have on the African-American, and other working-class communities in America.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the intensification of the process in neighbourhoods in New York like Greenwich Village leads to questions about the impact of this on the LGBT population nationwide. If each neighbourhood were to be gentrified beyond recognition, this could have far-reaching consequences for both the communities and their continued struggles against institutionalised discrimination. The study of the gentrification of Greenwich Village, and its significance to the LGBT community, is invaluable in understanding that aspect of the process. Despite the differences that exist between the two examples, it can shed light not just on the impact of gentrification on the LGBT community, but also on issues presented by the process in Harlem.<sup>11</sup>

The term gentrification was coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, who described a trend of middle- and upper-class people “invading” working-class areas, upgrading the housing stock and displacing existing residents.<sup>12</sup> Since then, the term has increasingly entered modern discourse, both in academia and wider society. It has been the focus of substantial debate among scholars. In 1986, Schaffer and Smith stated that the main areas for debate remained the definition, causes, and significance of the process.<sup>13</sup> In short, everything was contested, and little has changed since then. Early debates focused on whether it was indeed led by individuals of the middle and upper classes, or whether the dynamics of

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<sup>9</sup> J. Whelan, 'Fairpac Lobbies for Les/Gay Council Districts', *OutWeek*, (June 26, 1989), pp. 19, 24; M. Lauria and L. Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis of the Role of Gay Communities in the Urban Renaissance', *Urban Geography*, 6 (1985), pp. 152, 59.

<sup>10</sup> R. Schaffer and N. Smith, 'The Gentrification of Harlem?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 76 (1986); M. M. Taylor, *Harlem: Between Heaven and Hell*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. ix-xv; L. Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Spain, 'Gender and Urban Space', pp. 591-92.

<sup>12</sup> R. Glass, *London: Aspects of Change*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1964), pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>13</sup> Schaffer and Smith, 'Gentrification of Harlem', p. 348.



capitalist economics made the process inevitable.<sup>14</sup> Debate occurred over whether displacement should be integral to the definition, with numerous articles published disputing whether displacement occurs at a sufficient rate to justify its inclusion in the definition.<sup>15</sup> Contributions have been made that sought a broader understanding of the consequences for those that remain, whether regarding job opportunities, or the consequences it has on their quality of life more broadly.<sup>16</sup> Due to the impact that these debates have had on various scholars' definitions of gentrification, it is important to explore them in some detail, and be clear about the definition I use in this study.

### Defining Gentrification

For many years, the debate over how to explain why gentrification happened was dominant. This tended to unfold between those who focused on 'production' and those who stressed 'consumption' of the housing market. Those advocating the 'production' side were often geographers, for example Neil Smith, with a structural Marxist approach whose explanations privileged the dynamics of capitalist property markets in the process.<sup>17</sup> Smith argued that policies of real estate companies and banks, such as blockbusting and redlining, created large gaps between potential use value and the cost of redevelopment of large sections of real estate. He contended they then exploited these by opening the same areas up for redevelopment. Smith stated that consumer preference, while affecting the 'final form and character' of gentrified areas, remained of secondary importance.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, 'Toward a Theory'; D. Ley, 'Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 76 (1986).

<sup>15</sup> J. P. Byrne, 'Two Cheers for Gentrification', *Howard Law Journal*, 46 (2003), p. 406; L. Freeman and F. Braconi, 'Gentrification and Displacement New York City in the 1990s', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 70 (2004); K. Newman and E. Wyly, 'The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City', *Urban Studies*, 43 (2006).

<sup>16</sup> T. W. Lester and D. A. Hartley, 'The Long Term Employment Impacts of Gentrification in the 1990s', *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 45 (2014); M. Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling: Placing Gentrification Debate', *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 12 (2009); C. Valli, 'A Sense of Displacement: Long-Time Residents' Feelings of Displacement in Gentrifying Bushwick, New York', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39 (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Smith, 'Toward a Theory'.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, 'Toward a Theory', pp. 540, 43-48.

Human geographers tended to ascribe gentrification to 'Consumption', i.e. the changing tastes of a growing urban "new middle class".<sup>19</sup> David Ley epitomised this approach in his study of gentrification in Canada. He claimed three factors, which primarily influenced the demands of potential property buyers, were responsible. Ley argued that demographic changes, such as greater numbers of working women and the expansion of white-collar jobs at the expense of industrial work led to greater demand for housing from these growing groups. He linked this to changing tastes for cultural and social amenity: cities offered variation and tolerant attitudes, appealing to gay people and liberals who sought to avoid typically conservative suburbs. While he cautioned against transferring the argument too readily to different contexts, he argued that there was little or no correlation between rent gap identifiers and gentrification.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, compromise has increasingly been sought in the literature. Many now claim the Rent Gap thesis remains valid, given the attention it draws to periods of disinvestment that often predate gentrification, while allowing more space for the influence of changing modes of consumption.<sup>21</sup>

Included in Ruth Glass's definition of gentrification was displacement as a direct result of the process.<sup>22</sup> This contention went largely uncontested in many early studies of gentrification.<sup>23</sup> However, as the debates over causes began to subside, and scholars increasingly sought to incorporate consumption and production arguments, the consensus around displacement was increasingly challenged. In 2004, research by Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi concluded that gentrifying neighbourhoods had lower rates of displacement than poor areas.<sup>24</sup> They claimed that previous studies did not account for the multitude of reasons for residents leaving an area, and thus could not measure gentrification-induced displacement. Freeman and Braconi concluded that the numbers of

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<sup>19</sup> D. Ley, 'Gentrification and the Politics of the New Middle Class', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12 (1994).

<sup>20</sup> Ley, 'Alternative Explanations', p. 529.

<sup>21</sup> L. Lees, T. Slater, and E. Wyly, *Gentrification*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 84; J. Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction', in *From Urban Village to East Village: The Battle for New York's Lower East Side*, ed. by J. Abu-Lughod (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Glass, *London*, pp. xvii-xix.

<sup>23</sup> Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, p. 218; Ley, *New Middle Class*, p. 70; C. Hartman, 'The Right to Stay Put', in *The Gentrification Reader*, ed. by L. Lees, T. Slater, and E. Wyly (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 531.

<sup>24</sup> Freeman and Braconi, 'Gentrification and Displacement', p. 45.

those “displaced” were small compared with those who moved for other reasons, citing rent control and stabilisation policies as neglected factors.<sup>25</sup> While they emphasized that gentrification was not without consequence for the poor, the study, along with a similar work by Jacob Vigdor on Boston, was publicised enthusiastically by *USA Today* in 2005 as proof that gentrification was “a boost for everyone”.<sup>26</sup> Kathe Newman and Elvin Wyly disputed these findings in 2006, claiming that the studies defined the term too narrowly. For their own research, they studied the same source base, with different parameters, as well as conducting interviews with community organisers, citywide agencies and long-term residents of gentrifying areas. They claimed that the interviews illuminated numerous examples in which gentrification contributed to the displacement of working-class people that fell outside Freeman and Braconi’s sample. Their results suggested a significantly higher rate of displacement.<sup>27</sup>

Many studies focus on ‘direct displacement’ whereby tenants are forced to leave long-term residences due to a sudden rise in rent prices. However, in 1985 Peter Marcuse suggested supplementing direct displacement with his proposed notions of “exclusionary displacement” and “displacement pressure”. Exclusionary displacement referred to how working-class people were forced to look further afield from areas to which they would typically move due to rising rent prices, disrupting established social and familial networks. Displacement pressure, meanwhile, referred to the impact that gentrification had upon those who could afford to stay. He argued that the disruption to people’s social networks by direct and exclusionary displacement was significant. Marcuse further contended that the neighbourhood became less “liveable” to them as new businesses, catering to new residents with differing interests, replaced old ones. These factors combined to make even those who remained feel pressured to leave.<sup>28</sup> Thus, gentrification can still damage lower-income residents, even if it

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<sup>25</sup> Freeman and Braconi, 'Gentrification and Displacement', pp. 48, 51.

<sup>26</sup> Freeman and Braconi, 'Gentrification and Displacement', p. 50; J. L. Vigdor, 'Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?', *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, 2002 (2002); Newman and Wyly, 'Right to Stay Put, Revisited', p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Newman and Wyly, 'Right to Stay Put, Revisited'.

<sup>28</sup> P. Marcuse, 'Gentrification, Abandonment, and Displacement: Connections, Causes, and Policy Responses in New York City', *Urban Law Annual; Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law*, 28 (1985), pp. 204-08, 16-17.

happens through the supposedly more benign mechanism of “replacement” instead of “[direct] displacement”.<sup>29</sup>

A further contribution of note came from Mark Davidson. He built on approaches developed by Heidegger and Lefebvre, the idea that a “socio-spatial [phenomenon]” had been reduced “to a purely spatial event”, and that the debate needed to include the lived experience of space.<sup>30</sup> Davidson argued that while the direct displacement debate was necessary, it omitted an equally relevant debate on the “right to (make) place”, which he thought was denied poor communities in gentrifying neighbourhoods. Thus, displacement becomes a term that can be used to study the effects that gentrification has on the “various social relations bound up in (urban) space”.<sup>31</sup> Davidson’s formulation is a vital development of Marcuse’s notion of displacement pressure, as it states that the alienation of existing residents not just leads to, but can itself constitute displacement. This emphasises that gentrification illuminates deeper issues than simply those derived from spatial dislocation.<sup>32</sup> Gentrification encapsulates a multitude of issues that are bound up in the spaces and places within which people live, and to reduce it to mere questions of where people live is to fail to see deeper issues that the process can reveal.

As a result of the continuing debate as to whether it always follows gentrification, some scholars have questioned the inclusion of ‘displacement’ in its definition.<sup>33</sup> Even the previous consensus that gentrification is always caused, or at least enacted, by wealthy ‘outsiders’ moving to an area and reshaping it, has been problematized by Brian Goldstein’s recent work on Harlem.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, ‘gentrification’ is no longer used to merely describe simply the renovation and rehabilitation of old buildings as it once did, as the concepts of “new-build

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<sup>29</sup> C. Hamnett, 'The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification', *Transactions of Institute of British Geographers*, 16 (1991), pp. 175-76.

<sup>30</sup> Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling', p. 223.

<sup>31</sup> Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling', pp. 231-32.

<sup>32</sup> P. A. Redfern, 'What Makes Gentrification 'Gentrification'?', *Urban Studies*, 40 (2003), pp. 2364-65.

<sup>33</sup> S. Osman, 'Gentrification Matters', *Journal of Urban History*, 43 (2017), p. 173.

<sup>34</sup> Byrne, 'Two Cheers', p. 406; Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, p. 10; N. Smith, 'Gentrification and Uneven Development', *Economic Geography*, 58 (1982), p. 139; B. D. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 6.

gentrification” and “super-gentrification” suggest.<sup>35</sup> Goldstein took a broad approach, simply looking to explore the various explanations for the change from the “lost cause” Harlem of the 1960s to the arrival of national retail chains in recent years.<sup>36</sup> Suleiman Osman argued that utilising broad definitions is a useful approach for historians to take, to allow for greater investigation of how the nature of the process and its reception has changed over time.<sup>37</sup>

Considering this, I will define gentrification as the process in which a neighbourhood is transformed from a position of relative poverty to one more suited to wealthier people, to the detriment of the pre-existing population. This is reflected primarily by rising property values and the cost of living in the neighbourhood. Non-state actors often, but not always, drive the process. In the cases explored in this study, gentrification often involves people moving to a neighbourhood and actively reshaping it, through community organisations, political campaigning and cultural output. The ‘detriment’ of the pre-existing population includes direct displacement and the other categories suggested by Marcuse, exclusionary displacement and displacement pressure, which marginalise them in the housing market.<sup>38</sup> It also can refer to negatively impacted employment opportunities and the “displacement without dislocation” in which people’s sense of whether a neighbourhood is ‘home’ can be damaged.<sup>39</sup> Thus, it allows for a broad consideration of the factors that contribute to gentrification, as well as the myriad ways in which long-term residents of an area can be affected by it.

### Gentrification and the LGBT Community

Early scholars to raise the LGBT community’s role in gentrification were Ann Markusen and Manuel Castells, with Castells’ work on mapping the development

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<sup>35</sup> Smith, 'Gentrification and Uneven Development', p. 139; Osman, 'Gentrification Matters', p. 173; Glass, *London*, pp. xxviii-xix.

<sup>36</sup> Goldstein, *Roots of Urban Renaissance*, pp. 1-3; Taylor, *Harlem*, p. ix.

<sup>37</sup> S. Osman, 'Gentrification in the United States', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>38</sup> Marcuse, 'Gentrification, Abandonment, and Displacement', pp. 204-08.

<sup>39</sup> Lester and Hartley, 'Long Term Employment Impacts', p. 80; Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling', p. 219; Valli, 'Sense of Displacement', p. 1194.

of the gay community being the first to systematically explore the link.<sup>40</sup> Other studies have drawn attention to the propensity for LGBT people to move to large cities throughout history, due to the more liberal attitudes found there.<sup>41</sup> Scholars have drawn attention to the fact that gay men, in particular, have at times found themselves in financially advantageous positions. As men, they have had greater access to well-paying jobs than women and have benefitted from typically not having children to support.<sup>42</sup> However, there are important ways in which gentrification, when LGBT people are involved, is qualitatively different. Castells and Murphy drew attention to the ways in which the spatial concentration of gay people in San Francisco was vital in the creation of a 'gay community' that could be politically powerful.<sup>43</sup> By concentrating in certain areas, gay people could strengthen their electoral power, and thereby exert more influence on the movement for gay rights.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the creation of social networks in local areas further facilitated direct-action campaigning, through socio-political spaces such as gay bars and restaurants.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond mere political power in the form of electoral influence, 'gayborhoods' have had a profound social and cultural impact for LGBT people.<sup>46</sup> Such areas also formed safe places for LGBT people to come out, and explore their sexuality and identity, as well as develop a culture beyond mere opposition to oppression.<sup>47</sup> Other scholars have drawn connections between the very act of renovation, so often associated with gentrification, and gay identity. For Christopher Reed, renovation itself "can be read as a form of camp" that

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<sup>40</sup> A. R. Markusen, 'City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy', *Signs*, 5 (1980), p. S35; M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, (London: E. Arnold, 1983), pp. 158-61; M. Castells and K. Murphy, 'Cultural Identity and Urban Structure: The Spatial Organization of San Francisco's Gay Community', in *Urban Policy under Capitalism*, ed. by N. I. Fainstein and S. S. Fainstein (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982).

<sup>41</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, p. 32; G. Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 228-44.

<sup>42</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 161.

<sup>43</sup> Castells and Murphy, 'Cultural Identity', p. 254.

<sup>44</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 153.

<sup>45</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 159; N. M. Lewis, 'Ottawa's Le/le Village: Creating a Gaybourhood Amidst the 'Death of the Village'', *Geoforum*, 49 (2013), p. 233.

questions “normative values” with its celebration of a stripped aesthetic.<sup>48</sup> As such, some neighbourhoods, for example Greenwich Village and the Castro in San Francisco, and their gay communities have been instrumental in producing particularly prominent expressions of gay identity that have been adopted across the world.<sup>49</sup>

In later years the areas that have been used in this way by LGBT communities, and gentrified as a result, have continued to gentrify beyond the means of many of those very people. This is exemplified in many ways by the story of Jimmy Wright. He participated in many aspects of the early stages of gentrification in his neighbourhood. Now, while he is in the position of owning his property and so has the security of not being forced to leave, the luxury developments he is now opposing represents a new wave of gentrification bringing new potential modes of displacement.<sup>50</sup> Such stories are often used to justify stage-based arguments for gentrification, whereby a ‘first wave’ or ‘pioneer’ class sanitises and popularises an area, and is later subsumed by investment from ever-wealthier sources.<sup>51</sup> Overuse of stage models has been problematized by numerous academics; Gentrification is a chaotic process, and rarely occurs in a simple linear time frame, or evenly across space, meaning that different ‘stages’ can often have overlaps that span years.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the categorisation can be helpful to understand the roles that different actors play in gentrifying neighbourhoods, and how they interact, especially with regards to LGBT populations.<sup>53</sup>

As ‘gayborhoods’ have increasingly entered more advanced stages of gentrification, and assimilation has increased between LGBT communities and the wider population, a sense has grown that such neighbourhoods may be on the decline.<sup>54</sup> This can be compared with the growth of gentrification in Harlem,

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<sup>48</sup> C. Reed, 'Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment', *Art Journal*, 55 (1996), p. 68.

<sup>49</sup> J. Polchin, 'Having Something to Wear: The Landscape of Identity on Christopher Street', in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. by G. B. Ingram, A.-M. Bouthillette, and Y. Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), pp. 382-83.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, 'Jimmy Wright'.

<sup>51</sup> Spain, 'Gender and Urban Space', pp. 591-92.

<sup>52</sup> Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>53</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 161.

<sup>54</sup> Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, pp. 25-26; P. Leigh Brown, 'Gay Enclaves Face Prospect of Being Passé', *New York Times*, (October 30, 2007).

the significance of which has become increasingly discussed in the literature. There has been debate over whether this represents a more problematic development, as a process that to many is synonymous with an increasing white population, spreads to the capital of Black America.<sup>55</sup> This raises the question of whether some neighbourhoods deserve special protection, not just for the working-class communities that already live there but also for the preservation of areas of particular symbolic importance. For groups with histories of oppression, that used such places as sources of strength and community, it is especially salient. In the case of LGBT people, Greenwich Village is the closest comparison. However, these questions also relate to other parts of New York City, such as in Park Slope and the East Village. This analysis shows that gentrification is not merely an economic process. It results in conflicts over the cultural construction and use of space, and reveals and magnifies social inequalities and tensions present in wider society in doing so.

#### Historical study of Gentrification

Despite the substantial number of academic studies of gentrification, historians have been slow to examine the phenomenon. Osman is one of the few to have studied the process systematically, with his 2011 monograph on the gentrification of Brooklyn.<sup>56</sup> In recent years there have been further contributions by Aaron Shkuda on SoHo and Brian Goldstein on Harlem.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, Osman argued for the need of further study of the phenomenon in 2017, pointing out that the *Journal of Urban History* had published just five articles with 'gentrification' in the title since 1974 of his claim that historians continued to neglect the field. He argued that historians can make a vital contribution to the field, especially through the focus on illuminating change over time. Thus, they can help reveal how a word that originally described small-scale renovation of townhouses can be given the same name as the proliferation of high-rise developments in formerly industrial sections of cities.<sup>58</sup> Many non-historical studies have taken gentrification as a relatively static phenomenon,

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<sup>55</sup> Schaffer and Smith, 'Gentrification of Harlem', pp. 347-48; Byrne, 'Two Cheers', p. 410.

<sup>56</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*.

<sup>57</sup> Shkuda, *Lofts of SoHo*; Goldstein, *Roots of Urban Renaissance*.

<sup>58</sup> Osman, 'Gentrification Matters', pp. 172-73.



and even those that have considered how the process has changed have found a simpler timeline than historical studies have revealed.<sup>59</sup>

Osman's work on Brooklyn forms a key inspiration in this study, both for content and in its analytical framework. Covering a period from the immediate aftermath of the war to the 1980s, he catalogues and analyses the development of "Brownstone Brooklyn". This involved the "invention" of neighbourhoods such as Brooklyn Heights, Boerum Hill and Cobble Hill in what had simply been Northwest Brooklyn.<sup>60</sup> Osman ascribes this iteration of gentrification, at least, to 'brownstoners', drawn primarily from Ley's "New Middle Class".<sup>61</sup> Osman describes their conflict with the city 'establishment', especially over modernist urban renewal efforts. It is this conflict that Osman sees as central to the formation of the neighbourhoods of "Brownstone Brooklyn", as this group sought to defend their "authentic" neighbourhoods from the "Manhattanisation" projects led by government figures such as Robert Moses.<sup>62</sup> His focus on such conflicts brings forward consistent attention to neighbourhood groups and block associations. They often would organise the campaigns against the city administration and development corporations, as well as develop competing ideas about how the city should be structured and built.<sup>63</sup>

Osman also drew attention to independent political organisations and reform democratic clubs that sought to overcome the power of the old Democratic 'machine'. These groups of power-brokers were often dominated by old Irish and Italian American communities, and mostly relied on patronage and bribery.<sup>64</sup> As the new independent groups became successful, the increased political power that was secured allowed for even greater influence on planning regulations and the further development of such areas. Another key aspect of Osman's thesis is the importance that the ideal of 'authenticity' had upon the process. The desire to live somewhere "historic" and "real" was a key motivation for many individuals that the study describes. This was, in truth, often an

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<sup>59</sup> T. McKinnish, R. Walsh, and T. Kirk White, 'Who Gentrifies Low-Income Neighborhoods?', *Journal of Urban Economics*, 67 (2010); J. Hackworth and N. Smith, 'The Changing State of Gentrification', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 92 (2001).

<sup>60</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Ley, *New Middle Class*.

<sup>62</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 39, 52-54.

<sup>63</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 116.

<sup>64</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 132-33.

illusion: 'Brownstoners' would celebrate working-class culture publicly, while privately removing any trace of it from their houses.<sup>65</sup> These three strands form the basis of Osman's thesis, and offer unifying characteristics of the various number of people and groups that he describes as 'brownstoners'.

As I show in this thesis, there are many similarities between the Osman's brownstoners and the LGBT community in New York City in the last half-century, in Greenwich Village, the East Village and Park Slope. LGBT community groups showed a strong willingness to engage in political activities similar to those conducted by groups in Brooklyn, at the local, citywide and national level. Furthermore, many that moved to those neighbourhoods displayed very similar aesthetic tastes, valuing "rustic" and "original" features in their homes, as well as in the neighbourhood more widely. However, there are also significant differences between the groups that this study reveals. Gentrification by LGBT communities in this period coincided with the gay liberation movement as well as the catastrophic AIDS crisis. As a result, the development of community structures in neighbourhoods had significance unparalleled in Osman's example. Thus, the gentrification of these neighbourhoods, and the LGBT role in it raises LGBT specific questions and issues in both the early and later stages of the process.

My thesis analyses the impact of both the LGBT community on gentrification in New York City as well as how the further intensification of the process impacted back upon the community in later years. The first two chapters consider the impact of the LGBT population on the city, and the ways in which it contributed to gentrification across different neighbourhoods. The first chapter focuses on Greenwich Village and the political successes of the gay liberation movement in the city in the years after Stonewall. The development of the community in the neighbourhood was vital in this. The history of the gay community in Greenwich Village shows the ways in which it resembles the groups identified in Osman's work, through block associations, political organisations, and a desire to celebrate the neighbourhood's 'authenticity'. It also displays, through the history of the gay rights movement, how the space itself meant something beyond mere aesthetics, and thus how the community

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<sup>65</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 123.

differs from others involved in the process. The following chapter considers the growth of LGBT communities in other sections of the city, as people sought to live in areas away from the increasingly established Village, for matters of cost or taste. These places included, but were not limited to the East Village and Park Slope, each having different characteristics that drew people to them. Such spaces also demonstrate the ways in which members of the community who were not predominantly white gay men influenced the phenomenon in the city. The final chapter considers the impact that more recent gentrification has had on LGBT communities across New York City. It considers how policies instigated by the city government and private developers to accelerate the process have impacted the LGBT individuals and communities that have grown in these neighbourhoods.

I utilise oral histories and memoirs from members of the community as a source in understanding the meaning of the changes in New York City from people that experienced them.<sup>66</sup> These include a body of unstructured interviews conducted about people's lives in the city by the New York Public Library (NYPL) Oral History Project. They also include a semi-structured interview I conducted with Robert Pinter, a gay man resident in the East Village of Manhattan since 1982, about his experiences of LGBT life and gentrification over his time living in the neighbourhood. The personal experience of gentrification is indispensable when trying to understand the significance of the process for specific communities. Osman expressed scepticism of oral history, for the propensity of many to lapse into nostalgia.<sup>67</sup> However, if treated with care that can be useful. Nostalgia can be an indicator, if not of factual accuracy, of the significance of a certain change for a person. Thus, on an experiential level it can be instructive for exploring the impact that extended gentrification has had on LGBT communities in New York, especially when considering the study is on a "nonhegemonic class".<sup>68</sup> The oral histories will be used in collaboration with

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<sup>66</sup> S. Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, (Berkeley, Calif.: California University Press, 2013); E. White, *City Boy: My Life in New York During the 1960s and 1970s*, (Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> M. Frisch, 'Oral History and 'Hard Times': A Review Essay', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 33; A. Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History

archival sources to adjust for inaccuracies resulting from the mechanisms of memory. An archive of significance is that of *Outweek*, a weekly news magazine for the community that was published between 1989 and 1991. This was a key period, as the AIDS crisis was at its peak, and the LGBT community was increasingly moving to parts of the city outside of Greenwich Village. I consult numerous archives of various gay activists that lived in the city at the time, featuring correspondence, pamphlets and various ephemera from organisations they participated in. I also consult the vast body of *New York Times* material to draw on contemporary accounts from outside the community, and to contextualize community sources.

I demonstrate that the LGBT community had a historically specific role in the gentrification of neighbourhoods in New York City. This role reveals many important things about the process. Firstly, it does not merely consist of groups of wealthy people moving to an area and shaping it to suit their interests and aesthetic tastes. Rather, in the case of LGBT people, it was integral to the development of political and cultural identities that were crucial in the movement for gay rights. In the case of the LGBT community the process of moving to a neighbourhood, and investing in changing it, often was a political act. During the years of the early gay liberation movement, and then of the AIDS crisis, the strength that LGBT people drew from spatial concentration was significant. It allowed for a more assertive approach to campaigning and political negotiation, due to the increased electoral influence of the community. Along with allowing for more radical politics, it formed a safe space for a gay subculture to develop and stake its place on the national scene, increasing the visibility and viability of the community long-term.

Secondly, it shows that the idea of the 'community' should not be taken for granted. Throughout the history of LGBT people and their impact on gentrification, and vice versa, divisions within the community existed. There were many cases when the interests of subsets of the community were in conflict, and times when they were by no means united. LGBT involvement in gentrification was at times primarily the actions of gay men, at other times

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Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 67-68.

lesbian and transgender people, as well as there being moments in which a community at large was more coherent. Due to the importance of the moments of unity for the community as well as for the neighbourhoods in which they occurred, it is imperative to study these wider experiences. To neglect the study of lesbian and transgender involvement would lead to an incomplete analysis of the process and LGBT people's role within it.

Thirdly, it created spaces in which to live and socialise more freely at a time when homophobia remained widespread. As such, this thesis shows that when gentrification occurs, although existing communities can be damaged, it can manifest itself in parallel with the empowerment of other disadvantaged groups. The negative effects that the community has felt due to the escalation of gentrification in these neighbourhoods further complicate things. They indicate that as significant as a place can be for particular groups, the extent to which these places can endure in time and space is limited. As these LGBT spaces are threatened, there are potentially serious consequences for the community at large. The gentrification of these neighbourhoods represents a threat to their ability to facilitate the further cultural, social, and political growth of the LGBT population, at a time when it continues to face challenges and threats. The study of the LGBT community is a vital means of understanding gentrification's development in New York City in the last half-century, as well as the implications of the process generally for historically disempowered groups.

## **Chapter 1 – The Gentrification of Greenwich Village**

In 1962 Edmund White, rejected an offer to study for a PhD at Harvard and moved to New York City to pursue a relationship with someone he had met at university in Michigan. White settled in Greenwich Village, which was, at that time, “still an old Italian neighbourhood” full of small pasta restaurants where the first, and sometimes only, language of his neighbours was their Neapolitan dialect. Despite being “grungy” and “dangerous”, White was happy there. New York was the only “free port” in the U.S.; it was the only city in which one could “walk hand in hand with a member of the same sex”.<sup>1</sup> Many who moved to Greenwich Village in the same era recall the neighbourhood’s “rough and tumble” and the “revolutionary” political and social changes occurring there at the time.<sup>2</sup> Greenwich Village, although a neighbourhood with a large Catholic European population, had a long history of “unconventionality and sexual experimentation”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the decades after the war, even before Stonewall in 1969 and the gay liberation movement, Greenwich Village was the destination for many of the gay men who moved to New York.<sup>4</sup>

Descriptions of Greenwich Village now are very different to those of the 1960s. When Edmund White first moved to Greenwich Village, he rented a small apartment in the heart of the Village for \$100 per month, a quarter of his monthly wage at the time. Despite the neighbourhood continuing to be predominantly inhabited by Italian-Americans, it was there that he first visited a “gay restaurant”. White had heard of the idea before, but still found the concept of gay socialisation in public “fascinating”.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, gay people remained in the minority in the neighbourhood, under constant risk of harassment and

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<sup>1</sup> White, *City Boy*, pp. 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> C. Kapp, 'Interview with Chris Kapp', int. by B. Weiner, NYPL Community Oral History Project, Your Village, Your Story: Greenwich Village Oral History Project, (March 29, 2014); A. Stoliar, 'Interview with Arthur Stoliar', int. by B. Steinberg, NYPL Community Oral History Project, Your Village, Your Story: Greenwich Village Oral History Project, (January 06, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Shelley, 'Catholic Greenwich Village', p. 60; N. C. Edsall, *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Modern Western World*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 253-54; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, pp. 228-44.

<sup>4</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>5</sup> White, *City Boy*, pp. 6-7, 13.

violence, not just from residents but also often from the police.<sup>6</sup> By the 1980s and 90s the neighbourhood was increasingly described as “expensive”, and a sense grew that it lost some of its edge as “yuppies” and “clones... in jeans and flannel shirts with big moustaches” increasingly moved there, resulting in “skyrocketing rent”.<sup>7</sup> The Village has since changed even more, with those who moved there during the 1980s now describing the neighbourhood as having changed beyond recognition. Some no longer even visit the area and many, who have stayed thanks to rent-regulation, do not know anyone who could afford to move there at market rates.<sup>8</sup>

The gentrification of Greenwich Village has taken place over a number of decades, and has not followed a single, simple trajectory. Nonetheless, there is evidence of various actions and behaviours from LGBT people, predominantly but not exclusively gay men, that had a distinctive impact on the process. These include participating in community-based politics, investing in businesses in the neighbourhood, and contributing to the artistic and bohemian culture the Village has long been known for.<sup>9</sup> All of these actions form a key part of Osman’s thesis of what constituted ‘gentrifiers’ in Brooklyn in his period, as well as other works that consider the characteristics of ‘first-wave’ gentrification and the position of gay populations within that.<sup>10</sup> Something unique to ‘gay gentrification’ however, is Castells and Murphy’s formulation that politics plays a more central role in the process than for other groups. They argued that integral to the residential concentration of gay people in San Francisco, and the resulting gentrification, was the aim to strengthen the political and electoral influence of the

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<sup>6</sup> D. Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2010), pp. 31-34; White, *City Boy*, p. 15; A. Bell and others, 'The Best Defense: A Public Service Effort from Christopher Street Magazine and the New York Native', (Christopher Street Magazine & The New York Native), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 022 - Chelsea Gay Association, B2, F16 - Misc. Flyers, not CGA, 1981-1984; R. Johnson, 'Seven Sneering Youths Seized after Greenwich Village Rampage', *New York Post*, (December 31, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> J. Blotcher, 'Comrade in Arms', *OutWeek*, (April 25, 1990), p. 48; Kapp, 'Chris Kapp'; R. Pinter, 'Interview with Robert Pinter', int. by R. Vivian-Byrne, (October 16, 2017); C. Rodwell, 'Letter to the City Desk of New York Newsday', (May 12, 1987), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F10: 1987.

<sup>8</sup> C. Cosentino, 'Interview with Charles Cosentino', int. by S. Spiner, NYPL Community Oral History Project, Your Village, Your Story: Greenwich Village Oral History Project, (January 06, 2014); Kapp, 'Chris Kapp'.

<sup>9</sup> Stansell, *American Moderns*, p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 116, 23, 32-33; Clay, 'Mature Revitalized Neighborhood', p. 37; Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 161; Schaffer and Smith, 'Gentrification of Harlem', p. 347.

community.<sup>11</sup> This chapter considers the extent to which these formulations apply to the LGBT population of Greenwich Village. It also assesses the extent to which the population compares with Osman's 'brownstoners' and other first-wave gentrifier characteristics and considers whether Castells and Murphy's formulation is apt in the case of the community and its role in gentrification in the Village. Finally, it shows the extent to which the position of the gay community changed within the Village in the decades after 1969, and how that displays the impact the community had on the neighbourhood.

I draw from the archives of long-time gay activists in the Village, Craig Rodwell, Allen Roskoff, Michael O'Grady and Jon Nalley. Their papers provide valuable insight into their lives and campaigns in this period, as well as those of organisations in which they participated. The material includes letters, press releases and various collected pamphlets among other things. I draw on oral histories from the NYPL Oral History Project, and the memoir of the gay author, Edmund White, who lived in the Village in this period. These give an insight into the memory of the lived experience of the neighbourhood in the period from LGBT and straight people at the time. I also draw on archives of newspapers and magazines in the city at the time, especially the *New York Times* and *OutWeek*, a gay news magazine operating in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the height of the AIDS crisis. This allows for a broad understanding of the role of the community in the gentrification of Greenwich Village. The source base encompasses contemporary and retrospective accounts of the neighbourhood at this time, from within the community as well as the establishment newspaper of record in the city.

This chapter starts with the late 1960s, as the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 gave birth to the national gay liberation movement. Within the city, the gay community became louder and prouder on the city streets, and the movement saw political successes that helped reshape the city and Village politically and socially. The chapter then studies the AIDS crisis which fuelled a new rise of radical gay politics, and victories were won that gave greater legal recognition of the rights of LGBT people in the city on issues like housing, employment and access to healthcare. While many of these debates occurred citywide, these gains

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<sup>11</sup> Castells and Murphy, 'Cultural Identity', pp. 238, 54.



all indicate the growing influence of the gay community on the city. Furthermore, the centrality of the Village as the main powerbase of gay politics in the city became a key part of the already rich history of the area, something that has drawn people to the neighbourhood.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the chapter explores the controversy that surrounded the proposal of the *Gay Liberation Monument* in Christopher Park in the Village, as the increasingly confident and vocal gay community faced local opposition to the planned sculpture. The controversy reveals much about the impact that the community had on the neighbourhood, and exposes underlying tensions that existed between the growing LGBT population and some straight residents.

### Stonewall

In 1967 Craig Rodwell, a gay man originally from Illinois, opened the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop in Greenwich Village. Rodwell named it in honour of the “first homosexual in modern times to defend publicly the homosexual way of life”, as the bookshop was the first in the U.S. to exclusively stock material relating to “the homosexual and homophile movement”. Rodwell intended for the shop to be a centre-point of a movement for gay and lesbian rights. It was to serve as both a meeting point and hub for activism, hosting a “community bulletin board” and promising to publish tracts concerning the movement.<sup>13</sup> The location was chosen given its presence in the “gay section of the city”.<sup>14</sup> Rodwell was involved with the early ‘homophile movement’, participating in ‘sip-ins’ in 1966 with the New York Mattachine Society, an early gay rights organisation, in which they challenged bars that refused to serve gay people. They had limited success. The State Licensing Authority relaxed its rules slightly, and they gained some, generally derisive, publicity.<sup>15</sup> In 1968, Rodwell complained to *The Village Voice*, demanding it liberalised its attitude towards the use of the word ‘gay’ in

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<sup>12</sup> P. Malbin, 'If You're Thinking of Living In: Greenwich Village; a World of Its Own in the Big City', *New York Times*, (October 10, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> C. Rodwell, 'For Immediate Release', (1967), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B6, F15: Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop.

<sup>14</sup> L. Cuffie, 'Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop: Nine Years of Successful Service to the Community', *Gay Community News*, (December 18, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> T. A. Johnson, '3 Deviates Invite Exclusion by Bars; but They Visit Four before Being Refused Service, in a Test of S.L.A. Rules', *New York Times*, (April 22, 1966); Edsall, *Toward Stonewall*, p. 333.

the paper.<sup>16</sup> His letter of complaint was unsuccessful; the newspaper simply ignored him. However, just over a year later, his cause was to gain significant new momentum.

The events of a few days in the following year have come to be known as the Stonewall Uprising, Rebellion, or Riots, as well as simply 'Stonewall'. In June 1969, the Village's growing gay population's frustration at the continued harassment it faced from the police exploded on the streets of the Village. The riots occurred during what had appeared to be a routine raid by the police on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar with reputed links to organised crime, and a predominantly young and non-white clientele. However, on this occasion the people being ejected fought back. Over the next few days gay people, led by "Puerto Rican transvestites and young street people" took part in running battles with the police in the streets surrounding the bar.<sup>17</sup> The location of the Stonewall Inn led to a perfect storm. A large population of gay people lived locally, and were more familiar with the "highly irregular" local geography, allowing the massed crowds to match up with the NYPD, with officers predominantly drawn from the outer boroughs of the city.<sup>18</sup>

Despite getting relatively little attention in the *New York Times*, the riots were front-page news in *The Village Voice*, with a detailed description of the events and their immediate aftermath.<sup>19</sup> The final sentence of the *Village Voice* article concluded that "The liberation is underway", and this was to be a prescient comment.<sup>20</sup> Stonewall provided a crucial impetus for what became the gay liberation movement, and has since been referred to as a "Queer Bastille Day" as a result.<sup>21</sup> Within a month, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed, drawing on the politics of the New Left to bring a radical direct-action approach to gay rights activism. This was combined with a large increase in numbers

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<sup>16</sup> C. Rodwell, 'Letter to Edwin Fenger, Publisher of the Village Voice', (March 14, 1968), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B6, F15: Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop.

<sup>17</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, pp. 231-33.

<sup>18</sup> Carter, *Stonewall*, pp. 256-57.

<sup>19</sup> '4 Policemen Hurt in 'Village' Raid: Melee near Sheridan Square Follows Action at Bar', *New York Times*, (June 29, 1969); 'Police Again Rout 'Village' Youths: Outbreak by 400 Follows a near-Riot over Raid', *New York Times*, (June 30, 1969).

<sup>20</sup> L. Truscott IV, 'Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square', *The Village Voice*, (July 03, 1969), pp. 1, 18.

<sup>21</sup> J. McCourt, *Queer Street: Rise and Fall of an American Culture, 1947 - 1985 ; Excursions in the Mind of the Life*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2004), p. 187. White, *City Boy*, pp. 53-54.

joining the fight for gay rights. Gay campaigning organisations were founded across the country, and the next decade saw a string of gains at a far greater pace than had previously been achieved in years of campaigning. In the following decade, more than half of the states in the United States repealed their sodomy laws, and the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Stonewall instigated wider grass-roots participation in the movement for gay rights. For many this was exemplified simply by 'coming out': an expression of the "fusion of the personal and the political" that was the gay liberation movement.<sup>22</sup>

The impact on the community in New York itself was significant. The GLF earned early successes, with demonstrations organised against *The Village Voice* over its continued refusal to print the word 'gay' in the paper. They threatened the paper with legal action, and demonstrated outside its offices. The numbers and energy that the GLF brought to bear against the paper resulted in a swift change, that just a year ago had not been forthcoming.<sup>23</sup> Rodwell was keen to harness this new energy, and was an important figure behind the Christopher Street Liberation Day marches.<sup>24</sup> Many thousands of people attended the first "Christopher Street Memorial Day" march that he helped to arrange, to commemorate the anniversary of the riots a year later, a practice that continued in the following years.<sup>25</sup> The changes that occurred in the year after Stonewall were remarkable to White. He had lived in Rome for six months from January 1970, arriving back in the city just over a year after the riots. When he returned, "it seemed as if ten times more gays than ever before were on the streets. With ten times as many gay bars." Not only were there more gay people on the streets, "they were also more fearless and affectionate on the street than ever before.

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<sup>22</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, pp. 233-37; J. Katz and B. Gittings, 'Barbara Gittings: Interview with Barbara Gittings, 19 July, 1974', in *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.: A Documentary History*, (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Meridian, 1992), p. 427.

<sup>23</sup> 'The Village Voice', *Come Out!*, (November 14, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Carter, *Stonewall*, pp. 175-76, 230.

<sup>25</sup> L. Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals Hold a Protest Rally in Central Park', *New York Times*, (June 29, 1970); P. L. Montgomery, '5,000 Homosexuals March to Central Park for a Rally', *New York Times*, (June 28, 1971); R. Blumenthal, 'March Is Staged by Homosexuals', *New York Times*, (June 26, 1972).

They were loud and flirty or grim and sex-crazed, giddy or pompous – the whole gamut”.<sup>26</sup> In the Village at least, the liberation was underway.

### Community Activism and Consumption

Many have researched the symbolic victories that the gay liberation movement experienced in the years after Stonewall. But the manifestation of gay life in the Village that was ‘out’ in the years afterward has not been explored in as much depth. In the years afterward, the day-to-day lives of LGBT people, and their participation in community activism in the Village, had a profound impact on the neighbourhood. This was further accentuated by the continued campaigning for representation and rights at the city level, beyond the larger national movement.

The Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop was never particularly financially successful, but did enough over the years to stay open and provide Rodwell a platform for his activism, as well as serve as an important centre for the growing community in Greenwich Village.<sup>27</sup> Through the bookshop, he was involved in a number of neighbourhood-based groups during the 1980s that sought to ‘improve’ the area. One example was his proposed formation of a Village-based lesbian and gay neighbourhood association. He suggested naming the association after Willa Cather, the early-twentieth-century author, in an effort to emulate other organisations that were named for “gay and lesbian writers and educators of the past”. The suggestion of taking a historical lesbian figure who had lived in Greenwich Village seems to be an effort to make an historically authentic claim to the village for the lesbian and gay community. Rodwell suggested the name out of a desire to inform “younger generations” of lesbian and gay people of their “heritage” in the Village, both as residents and significant contributors to its cultural history.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the choice of an author whose most notable works were of life in the old American West, while probably coincidental, is striking when considering the long observed associations drawn between

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<sup>26</sup> White, *City Boy*, pp. 69, 75-76.

<sup>27</sup> K. Tobin, 'Letter to Craig Rodwell', (July 28, 1974), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B6, F15: Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop; C. Rodwell, 'Letter to Michael Denny', (November 20, 1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F2: 1980; B. Mulroy, 'New York City Journal', *Alive*, (November 14, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> C. Rodwell, 'A Proposal', (1979), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F1: 1979.

'gentrifiers' and frontier imagery.<sup>29</sup> There is no evidence that *The Willa Cather Neighborhood Association* was ever actually formed, but the intention and effort on the part of Rodwell is clear.

Another example of this was his involvement and collaboration with other shops on Christopher Street in an informal group aimed at "block improvement". The group was described in a 1979 *New York Times* article on the "Revival" of the street.<sup>30</sup> The group sought to advertise and organise security mutually, in order to maintain the "real neighborhood". This maintenance involved the restoration of the "19<sup>th</sup> century original" facades of the shops, refashioning them "exactly" as they were. Rodwell was also an active member of the Christopher East Block Association, a residents' group acting in the same area.<sup>31</sup> The group campaigned against bars known for drugs and prostitution, and hosted "spring planting and clean-up" days, in an attempt to beautify the area.<sup>32</sup> They hosted lectures on historic landmark planning laws, to protect old buildings against demolition, as the group sought to "save the historic character" of the Village.<sup>33</sup> One member of the Christopher Street business group claimed that the Village "is a real neighbourhood", though if that were true, such significant renovations were surely not necessary.<sup>34</sup> Such attitudes are strikingly similar to those of the 'brownstoners' studied by Osman in Brooklyn in the same era, for whom renovation seemed to be more about removal of the recent past to reach a "symbolic era" than a celebration of the area's history.<sup>35</sup> This is reflected

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<sup>29</sup> E. Funda, 'Willa Cather', in *Oxford Bibliographies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); N. Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> A.-M. Shiro, 'Christopher Street's Merchants Join in Its Revival', *New York Times*, (December 03, 1979).

<sup>31</sup> M. Schoenbaum and C. Rodwell, 'Report of the Nominating Committee', (1986), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F12: Christopher Street East Block Association.

<sup>32</sup> K. Brunet, 'New Tavern on Christopher Street Arouses Bad Memories', *The Villager*, (July 08, 1982); 'Spring Planting Sat., May 10, 11am', (Christopher East Block Association), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F12: Christopher Street East Block Association.

<sup>33</sup> 'Spring Planting'; 'Enforcing the Landmarks Law: How Citizens Can Help', (Christopher East Block Association, 1984), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F12: Christopher Street East Block Association; P. La Rosa, 'In the Village, Matters of Taste', *New York Daily News*, (September 13, 1983); Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> Shiro, 'Christopher Street's Merchants'. [Emphasis added.]

<sup>35</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 123.

in the great interest given to the neighbourhood's "European" feel, without the article once mentioning the long-established Italian connection with the area.<sup>36</sup>

The impulse to celebrate and preserve the "historic character" of the village is one that was present in other LGBT groups at the time. For example V.I.L.L.A.G.E., "Village Improvement through a Local Lesbian and Gay Effort", sought to act along similar lines for the 'community', referring in this instance to both the Village community as a whole, and the LGBT community.<sup>37</sup> Within the pages of *OutWeek*, the gay news magazine from the late 1980s and early 1990s, the same appeal to ideas of historical authenticity, at least aesthetically, can be found in various adverts. An advert for the "Village Apothecary", a pharmacy located in Greenwich Village, used text written in a stylised font that evokes a sense of it being traditional and old-fashioned. The same advert also drew attention to its "computerisation" and the fact it accepts "VISA-AMEX-MASTERCARD", reflecting the incongruity of locating an "apothecary" in the centre of the modern western world of the 1980s.<sup>38</sup> These tastes are further reflected in the imagined housing preferences of the readership of *OutWeek*, as advertisements for apartments to rent and buy in "newly renovated" brownstones and "lofts" with features such as "exposed brick" and "hardwood floors" testify.<sup>39</sup> Further descriptions of such preferences appeared in satirical articles about "Political faggots" wanting to "homestead in abandoned buildings" and "Health Food Fags" wanting to shop in grocery shops with "lots of barrels".<sup>40</sup>

That "character" also encouraged other groups associated with gentrification to move to, and stay in, the same areas.<sup>41</sup> For example Chris Kapp, a female actor who moved to Greenwich Village in 1972, talked of being drawn to the "pretty" village, and its "interesting history", as well as the allure of living in a "brownstone". Such language is a strong evocation of the aesthetic that is often

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<sup>36</sup> Shiro, 'Christopher Street's Merchants'; C. Rodwell, 'To the Reporter from the New York Times', (November 21, 1979), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F1: 1979.

<sup>37</sup> D. Shapiro, 'Letter to "Fellow Community Members and Concerned Individuals"', (January 14, 1981), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F14: Lower Manhattan Gay Neighbors, V.I.L.L.A.G.E.; 'Charter', (V.I.L.L.A.G.E., 1981), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F14: Lower Manhattan Gay Neighbors, V.I.L.L.A.G.E.

<sup>38</sup> 'Advertisement for Village Apothecary', *OutWeek*, (January 07, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> 'Classifieds: Apartments for Rent', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 61; 'Classifieds: Apartments for Sale', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 62; 'Apartments for Rent', p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> M. Signorile, 'Uncharted Territory', *OutWeek*, (July 24, 1989), p. 48; M. Signorile, 'Fag Baiting', *OutWeek*, (August 14, 1989), p. 51.

<sup>41</sup> Ley, 'Alternative Explanations'.

associated with gentrification in New York, forming a central aspect to Osman's thesis on Brooklyn. While she was straight, she described spending a lot of time with gay friends in the bars of the Village, being comfortable to be walked home by them at night. She also spoke fondly of working with a "politically gay" theatre company in the area. She had both a shared interest in the aesthetic values that were common in the neighbourhood at the time, but also a liberal attitude towards gay and lesbian people. Kapp's story shows that gay people were key contributors to the cultural life of the Village, not just an indistinguishable part of a broader group. Indeed, to her, gay people were not merely in the background, but were at the forefront of descriptions of life in the Village, at the time when it was "where the action seemed to be happening".<sup>42</sup>

The neighbourhood's developing reputation as the heart of the gay community in New York encouraged other gay people to move to the neighbourhood. The reasoning forms a common refrain in stories about the decision to move to and stay in New York. Charles Cosentino was so impressed by the number of people in the gay bars in Greenwich Village when he visited at the age of sixteen that he moved there as soon as he could to work in one of these bars, and then stayed in the neighbourhood for fifteen years.<sup>43</sup> Another similar story was that of a gay man recently arrived in New York being who decided to stay after being so struck by the colourful sight of Rollerena, the city's roller-skate-wearing "fairy godmother". For someone struggling to adjust to the city, having moved to New York from Iowa, the "vision in tule [sic] and rhinestones" was a living, roller-skating embodiment of the liberation that was possible in the Village.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to remember that in the 1980s and 1990s, gay and lesbian people remained at risk of violence, with the situation changing little from the early days of White's life in the Village in the 60s.<sup>45</sup> In the first half of the 1990s,

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<sup>42</sup> Kapp, 'Chris Kapp'.

<sup>43</sup> Cosentino, 'Charles Cosentino'.

<sup>44</sup> J. Blotcher, 'Rolling Thunder: New York's Fairy Godmother Looks Back at Life in the South, Fighting in 'Nam, Skating at Studio 54 and Acting up at City Hall', *OutWeek*, (December 24, 1989), p. 38.

<sup>45</sup> White, *City Boy*, p. 11; Johnson, 'Seven Sneering Youths'. M. Chesnut, 'Anti-Gay Violence near Gracie Mansion and in the Village: Activists Link Attacks with Stalled State Bias Bill', *OutWeek*, (August 07, 1989), pp. 15, 56; J. Voelcker, 'In Two Village Gay Bashings, Police Response Key',

anti-gay crime was the fastest growing category of hate-crime in New York, and reports of attacks were regular in the gay press.<sup>46</sup> Violence occurred across New York, but Greenwich Village witnessed some of the most high-profile attacks. One particularly violent example was the bombing of Uncle Charlie's, the bar in the Village where Charles Cosentino worked, in April 1990.<sup>47</sup> There was also a widespread feeling within the community that the NYPD was not a sympathetic ally. Many accounts of anti-gay violence were accompanied with criticisms of the police response as inadequate. Others detailed intimidating and sometimes violent behaviour from police that raised questions of more serious institutional homophobia.<sup>48</sup> The problems of institutionalised bias extended beyond the NYPD, the healthcare system was also heavily criticised, with St. Vincent's hospital in the Village facing a long-running campaign to improve its treatment of LGBT patients.<sup>49</sup>

In this context, the concentration of the community in the Village was significant. The city was a key centre of the crisis, and thousands in the city were diagnosed, the majority of whom were from the LGBT community.<sup>50</sup> In the fight for improved healthcare and support from the national and city government, organisations like Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) that grew out of New York based activists were key.<sup>51</sup> ACT UP became one of the most visible radical campaigning groups in New York City, bringing large numbers to protest healthcare and housing provision for

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*OutWeek*, (May 16, 1990), pp. 13, 37; J. Umlaut, 'It Can Happen Anywhere', *OutWeek*, (October 29, 1989), p. 27; J. Voelcker, 'It Can Happen Anywhere II', *OutWeek*, (November 12, 1989), p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> J. Voelcker, 'Surge in Gay-Bashing May Swamp Victim Advocates', *OutWeek*, (June 20, 1990), pp. 16-17, 31.

<sup>47</sup> A. Miller and D. Osborne, 'Bombing at Gay Bar Raises Community Ire', *OutWeek*, (May 16, 1990), pp. 12-13; Cosentino, 'Charles Cosentino'.

<sup>48</sup> Voelcker, 'Two Village Gay Bashings', pp. 13, 37; B. Seyda, 'Park Slope Journal: Violence, Silence and Lesbians', *OutWeek*, (June 20, 1990), pp. 36-37; D. Osborne, 'Midtown Cops at Gay Porn Flick', *OutWeek*, (March 18, 1990), p. 22; M. Signorile, 'True Blue', *OutWeek*, (December 10, 1989), pp. 38-41.

<sup>49</sup> J. Nalley, 'Out Takes: St. Vincent's Hospital', *OutWeek*, (September 24, 1989), p. 24; J. Nalley, 'Out Takes: Further Protests at St. Vincents', *OutWeek*, (October 01, 1989), p. 22; J. Nalley, 'St. Vincents Confronts Anti-Gay Bias Charges', *OutWeek*, (November 12, 1989), p. 25; Signorile, 'True Blue', p. 40.

<sup>50</sup> 'AIDS Alarms, and False Alarms', *New York Times*, (February 04, 1987).

<sup>51</sup> P. M. Boffey, 'Doctors Who Shun AIDS Patients Are Assailed by Surgeon General', *New York Times*, (September 10, 1987); J. Bell, 'Rethinking the "Straight State": Welfare Politics, Health Care, and Public Policy in the Shadow of AIDS', *Journal of American History*, 104 (2018), pp. 943-45; D. France, *How to Survive a Plague: The inside Story of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS*, (2016), pp. 32, 253-54.



people with AIDS.<sup>52</sup> The concentration of the community in specific areas of the city allowed these groups to grow, and then mobilise quickly and effectively at a time when this was especially urgent.

During the 1980s and 90s, AIDS came to dominate the agenda in the LGBT community, due to it being disproportionately affected by the crisis. AIDS became an issue around which many members of the community became politically involved. Ed Koch, the long-time mayor of the city, was heavily criticised for not doing enough to help the community in the wake of the crisis.<sup>53</sup> AIDS was also a key issue in Democrat Dave Taylor's campaign to be one of the first openly gay candidates elected to the city council, as he sought to build coalitions with the African-American and Latino communities in his district that included Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea.<sup>54</sup> However, it could not always be used as a tool for uniting gay and Black and Hispanic communities. This was demonstrated by the controversial appointment of the first black health commissioner in city history. It caused divisions between the communities as LGBT criticism of his policies on AIDS contrasted with the black community celebrating the milestone.<sup>55</sup>

The LGBT community was, however, increasingly confident in its political power in the city at this time. Although openly gay candidates for the city council in the elections of 1985 and 1989 were defeated at the primary stage, the confidence in the 'gay vote' was strong, and candidates from outside the community courted it.<sup>56</sup> *OutWeek* urged the community to support community

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<sup>52</sup> C. Bull, 'Protestors at Brooklyn Hospital', *OutWeek*, (July 03, 1989), p. 23; M. Chesnut, 'AIDS Activists March up Sixth Avenue: "Out of the Ghetto and into the Streets"', *OutWeek*, (July 10, 1989), p. 14; B. Currie, 'Police Violence at Trump Tower: 6 Arrests at Act up Homeless Demo', *OutWeek*, (November 12, 1989), pp. 22-23; J. Voelcker, 'Cop Fingered in Violence at Act up Demo', *OutWeek*, (April 04, 1990), p. 24; A. Miller, 'Demonstration in Bensonhurst', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> S. Katz, 'Koch's Fall from Grace: The Erosion of a Mayor's Lesbian and Gay Support', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), pp. 34-37; Editorial, 'Outweek Endorsements', *OutWeek*, (September 04, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> S. Katz, 'Will Gays Really Fly in New York Politics? Tom Duane and Dave Taylor Talk About the Lesbian and Gay Vote, the Hetero Vote and Kissing in Public', *OutWeek*, (August 21, 1989), pp. 32-35; D. Kirby, 'Out Takes: Dave Taylor', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 30.

<sup>55</sup> G. Rotello, 'Dinkins Appoints Myers Amidst Angry Protests: Mayor Ignores Gay Objections on Top Health Post', *OutWeek*, (January 28, 1990), pp. 12, 54; N. Reyes, 'Addressing the Rifts in the AIDS Community: Blacks and Gays Gear up for the Myers Years', *OutWeek*, (April 11, 1990), pp. 16-17, 41.

<sup>56</sup> S. Katz, 'Greitzer Survives Another Gay Challenge: Duane Loses by 3,000 Votes, Announces '91 Candidacy', *OutWeek*, (September 24, 1989), p. 14; A. Miller and K. Miller, 'Taylor Defeated in

efforts to increase turnout and vote for candidates supportive of LGBT issues.<sup>57</sup> The magazine gave support to David Dinkins' campaign for the mayoralty. Articles were written citing the possibility of gaining greater access and influence under Dinkins, who courted the gay vote, while also having the more fundamental desire to keep Koch and then the conservative republican Rudy Giuliani out of office.<sup>58</sup> Following Dinkins' victories in the campaign, *OutWeek* championed the gay vote as crucial in defeating his opponents.<sup>59</sup> Involvement in city politics by organisations within the gay community was not just limited to endorsements in elections. Readers were encouraged to continue to pressure the city government to be supportive of their interests. The paper reported regularly on the city's response to the AIDS crisis, continuing battles over housing rights for gay people and other gay rights issues in the city.<sup>60</sup>

FAIRPAC, a New York State gay and lesbian political action committee, also campaigned to influence the Charter Revision Commission redrawing district boundaries for the city government. New council districts were to be created, and FAIRPAC wanted to ensure that areas with large gay populations, most notably Greenwich Village, would not straddle such districts. Under the electoral system this would have reduced the political power of the community.<sup>61</sup> Despite their campaign, the final draft that was put to vote did not explicitly promise to consider districting based on populations of shared sexual orientation alongside race and religion.<sup>62</sup> Spatial concentration has long been associated with political power, and the highly localised LGBT population was known to present an opportunity to elect sympathetic politicians to

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West Side Council Race', *OutWeek*, (September 24, 1989), p. 15; 'Advertisement for Ronnie Eldridge, Democratic Candidate for City Council', *OutWeek*, (September 18, 1989), p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> S. Katz, 'Outweek's City Council Primary Election Guide', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 14; K. Miller, 'Out Takes: Poll Palls', *OutWeek*, (November 12, 1989), p. 29.

<sup>58</sup> S. Katz, 'What's in a Speech?', *OutWeek*, (October 08, 1989), pp. 30, 33; D. Committee for David, 'Lesbians and Gays Come Out! For David Dinkins', *OutWeek*, (September 11, 1989), p. 25; Editorial, 'Outspoken: Dinkins or Disaster', *OutWeek*, (November 05, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> G. Rotello, 'Dinkins Wins Primary with 58% of the Gay Vote: Acceptance Speech Angers Lesbians, Gays, AIDS Advocates', *OutWeek*, (September 24, 1989), pp. 12-13; B. Currie, 'Dinkins Thanks Gay Community for Victory', *OutWeek*, (November 19, 1989), p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Katz, 'Koch's Fall', p. 34; G. Rotello, 'Furor Erupts over Choice for Top NYC Health Post', *OutWeek*, (January 21, 1990), pp. 12-15, 54; Whelan, 'Fairpac Lobbies', pp. 16, 74; R. Sugden, 'Out Takes: Your Day in Court', *OutWeek*, (December 10, 1989), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Whelan, 'Fairpac Lobbies', pp. 19, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Fairpac, 'Forum on Nyc's Proposed Charter Revision', *OutWeek*, (July 31, 1989), p. 60; J. Whelan, 'Charter Commission Snubs Gays: Nixes Sexual Orientation for Redistricting Plan', *OutWeek*, (August 21, 1989), pp. 16-17.

government.<sup>63</sup> *OutWeek* encouraged its readership to reject the charter, arguing that it gave no assurances that LGBT communities would be given consideration in the redistricting.<sup>64</sup> The effort was unsuccessful, but shows awareness on the part of those campaigning of the importance of residential concentration in the consolidation of political power, a defining aspect of Castells' work on gentrification.<sup>65</sup>

Gay people, however, increasingly got elected in the 1990s. The first openly gay members joined the city council in 1991, including Tom Duane, elected in District 3, which covered Greenwich Village and parts of Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen.<sup>66</sup> The community was also able to rally support in less high-profile elections, for example with the election of Jon Nalley to the Community School Board for District 2 of Manhattan, which included all of Greenwich Village, in 1993. Nalley received, at that time, the most votes ever for a candidate for a school board in city history.<sup>67</sup> Nalley's campaign actively emphasized the importance of electing gay voices to the board, pledging to support teaching about AIDS in schools, and being a "voice for our community".<sup>68</sup> Nalley was able to raise over \$3,500 in individual donations, with amounts ranging from \$10 to \$200.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Nalley received endorsements from a number of political organisations, both from within and outside the LGBT community.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, p. 3; Castells and Murphy, 'Cultural Identity', p. 238.

<sup>64</sup> Editorial, 'Outspoken: Vote "No" on the New City Charter', *OutWeek*, (October 29, 1989), p. 4; A. Finder, 'The 1989 Elections: Charter; Overhaul of New York City Charter Is Approved, Polls Show', *New York Times*, (November 08, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> D. Osborne, 'Of Gays, Lesbians and City-Council Districts', *OutWeek*, (June 20, 1990), pp. 20, 34; D. Osborne and A. Miller, 'No Gays for City Council District Panel', *OutWeek*, (May 02, 1990), p. 14; Castells and Murphy, 'Cultural Identity', pp. 238, 54

<sup>66</sup> J. C. McKinley Jr, 'New York City Council Results Show Ripples of Change', *New York Times*, (November 06, 1991).

<sup>67</sup> S. Dillon, 'New York City's 32 School Boards Get New Faces but Not New Views', *New York Times*, (May 22, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> 'Elect Jon Nalley', (Friends of Jon Nalley, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1).

<sup>69</sup> 'Collected Donations to "Friends of Jon Nalley"', (1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1).

<sup>70</sup> '1993 School Board Elections Voter Guide', (Empire State Pride Agenda, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1); 'Vote May 4', (The Lesbian Avengers, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1); '1993 School Board Election Endorsements', (Chelsea Reform Democratic Club, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1); 'School Board District Two, We Endorse', (Village Independent Democrats, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1); 'Vote Tuesday May 4th for

Greenwich Village was one of the centres of this effort, with the Village Independent Democrats (VID), and the Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats (GLID) both active in the neighbourhood.<sup>71</sup> VID was active from the 1950s and, much like similar organisations elsewhere in the city, was made up of people inspired by Adlai Stevenson's politics, and successfully campaigned against the Democratic Party 'machine'.<sup>72</sup> It tended to be supportive of gay politics; it counted a number of LGBT people among its members, and endorsed gay candidates for public office in the city.<sup>73</sup> GLID was formed initially as the Gay Democratic Club of Manhattan, briefly becoming Gay Independent Democrats, before settling on GLID by 1980, in an effort to encourage more women to join.<sup>74</sup> Although not based permanently in the Village, GLID regularly met there, and based its efforts on increasing gay representation in city government in the neighbourhood.<sup>75</sup>

The Village became a focal point for progressive activism and organising as a result, hosting protests against the Reagan government over its record on gay and lesbian issues, the economy, foreign policy and other issues.<sup>76</sup> Such

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New York City School Boards!!!', *GLIDnews*, (April, 1993), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 040, Jon Nalley Papers, B6, F53: NYC Community School Board Elections (Folder #1).

<sup>71</sup> 'School Board District Two, We Endorse'; M. O'Grady, 'Report on Gay and Lesbian Independent Democrats (GLID) General Membership Meeting of January 7, 1981', (1981), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F6: GLID.

<sup>72</sup> On Adlai Stevenson, the governor of Illinois who inspired new Democratic political clubs and groups in the 50s and 60s, see Osman: Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 129; 'New Face in the Council: Carol Hutter Greitzer', *New York Times*, (January 29, 1969); J. Kandell, 'Carmino De Sapio, Political Kingmaker and Last Tammany Hall Boss, Dies at 95', *New York Times*, (July 28, 2004); R. Reeves, 'Lindsay's Democrats: Conscience and Political Pragmatism Held to Inspire Endorsement of Mayor', *New York Times*, (October 20, 1969).

<sup>73</sup> 'David Rothenberg: Action for a Change', (Friends of David Rothenberg, 1985), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F31: Sympathetic Politicians; S. R. Wiesman, '5 Gay Candidates Are in State Contests', *New York Times*, (June 16, 1972).

<sup>74</sup> 'Constitution of the Gay Democratic Club of Manhattan', M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988); J. Levin, 'To the Membership of Gid (Gay Independent Democrats)', (January 01, 1979), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988); 'Minutes of May 2nd Meeting 1979', (1979), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988); J. Levin, 'Newsnotes', (1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988).

<sup>75</sup> O'Grady, 'Report on GLID', p. 7; 'Minutes of the GLID Meeting of January 6, 1982', (1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988); 'Vote Tuesday May 4th'; D. D'Allesandro, 'Charter Change', *GLID News*, (September, 1987), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988); W. Rubin, 'Report on the Rothenberg Campaign', (1985), M&A Div., NYPL, Allen Roskoff Papers, B4, F2: GLID (1979-1988).

<sup>76</sup> C. April, 'National Day of Lesbian & Gay Resistance to Reaganism - April 28', (1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F5: 1982 (B); All-Peoples Congress, 'Roll Back Reaganism', (1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F5: 1982 (B); All-Peoples Congress, 'Mass

experience gave gay people the connections and organisational abilities to further advance more personal causes. This ranged from citywide campaigns for greater rights and representation to neighbourhood agitation against “problem” establishments.<sup>77</sup> For example, VID members endorsed Duane and Nalley’s successful election campaigns in 1991 and 1993.<sup>78</sup> Such political connections form a key element of many theses on gentrification.<sup>79</sup> The accumulation of political gains by the community allowed for more assertive campaigning in the Village. This was shown in a decade-long dispute over the built environment of the neighbourhood. It started in 1979 when a proposal was made to construct a monument to memorialise the gay liberation movement in the heart of the Village. The debates that followed exemplify the connection between the political progress of the community and its impact on the neighbourhood.

### The Gay Liberation Monument Controversy

“The blacks have their Selma, the Jews their Wailing Wall, the Arabs their Mecca and Medina. For millions of gay people throughout the world, Christopher Park, opposite Stonewall Inn is the logical place to put such sculpture”, said Bruce Voeller in 1980. He was defending the proposal to place a sculpture titled “Gay Liberation” in Christopher Park, Sheridan Square, in the heart of Greenwich Village as a monument to the gay liberation movement.<sup>80</sup> The monument was the idea of Ohioan philanthropist Peter Putnam, who, with the help of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) and Voeller commissioned the sculptor George Segal to create a statue as a monument to mark ten years of the gay liberation movement. The statue depicts two couples, one male and one female, standing and sitting in relaxed poses with each other.

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Demonstration Planned for Lesbian and Gay Community on April 28th at Sheridan Square', (1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F5: 1982 (B).

<sup>77</sup> J. Sheehan, 'Koch, Cuomo Get Together on Westway Park', *The Villager*, (June 28, 1984); M. Oreskes, 'To New Yorkers, Border War with Jersey Has Claimed a Victim: Westway', *New York Times*, (September 25, 1985); Brunet, 'New Tavern'.

<sup>78</sup> 'New Yorkers Endorsing the Christopher Park Gay Pride Sculpture', (Mariposa Foundation), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F12: Gay Liberation Statue; '1993 School Board Election Endorsements'; A. Stanley, 'Race Is Likely to Yield First Gay Member of Council', *New York Times*, (September 10, 1991); 'David Rothenberg: Action for a Change'.

<sup>79</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>80</sup> E. E. Asbury, 'Sculpture Planned for 'Village' Brings Objections', *New York Times*, (August 28, 1980).

As Voeller said, Christopher Park seemed an obvious choice due to its proximity to the birthplace of the gay liberation movement.<sup>81</sup> However, the controversy that followed demonstrate that spaces in cities are rarely independent of their local contexts. Despite the site's national significance, the debates on a local level almost prevented the statue from getting built. It was eventually installed twelve years after the initial proposal.<sup>82</sup> The statue controversy reveals tensions within the neighbourhood between the growing LGBT population and other residents.<sup>83</sup> These debates, ostensibly over the statue, became proxies for wider questions about the reception of the growing local LGBT population by straight residents of the Village.

There is a long-observed tendency for “dominant groups” to use monuments to cement their power and accompanying privileges and discourses in a particular place.<sup>84</sup> It has been argued that monuments that celebrate queer subjects challenge this traditional role of statues, increasing the visibility of such communities, memorialising the struggle of these groups and stimulating further activism for rights.<sup>85</sup> On a national scale *Gay Liberation* was designed to serve that purpose.<sup>86</sup> However, within the Village it also served a more traditional role: a territorial marker to physically immortalise the connection between the increasingly confident community and the neighbourhood.<sup>87</sup> There was considerable local opposition to the statue that shows that the growing acceptance experienced by LGBT people was not total. Much of the opposition was homophobic, ranging from somewhat thinly veiled to explicit and vitriolic.

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<sup>81</sup> C. Rickey, 'Provoke, Don't Placate', *Village Voice*, (September, 1980).

<sup>82</sup> H. Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy', *New York City News*, (September, 1980); M. Kurtz, 'Gay Liberation Statue Set for Installation', *QW*, 1992).

<sup>83</sup> "'Greenwich Village Is Not Amused'", *Village Voice*, (September, 1980); M. O'Grady, 'Why Some Gays Are against the Statue', LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F12: Gay Liberation Statue; V. Schneider, 'Letter to Charles Persell', (September, 1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F11: Christopher Park Statues Controversy, 1980-1981; C. Rodwell, 'Some Objections to the Segal "Gay Liberation" Statue', (1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F11: Christopher Park Statues Controversy, 1980-1981.

<sup>84</sup> J. Orangias, J. Simms, and S. French, 'The Cultural Functions and Social Potential of Queer Monuments: A Preliminary Inventory and Analysis', *Journal of Homosexuality*, (2017), p. 1; J. F. Osborne, 'Counter-Monumentality and the Vulnerability of Memory', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 17 (2017).

<sup>85</sup> Orangias, Simms, and French, 'The Cultural Functions and Social Potential of Queer Monuments', p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>87</sup> R. Peters, 'Koch Supports Notion of a Homosexual Shrine for New York City', *Council for Community Consciousness*, (August, 1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F11: Christopher Park Statues Controversy, 1980-1981.

However, some criticisms also displayed anxieties about the potential impact of a growing gay community on property values in the neighbourhood, at a time when 'gentrification' was increasingly entering the public lexicon.<sup>88</sup> The opposition is revealing about the impact that the changes of the previous decades in the neighbourhood had on the relationship between the LGBT and straight communities living there.

The argument for the monument was largely based on the idea of giving "recognition" to the gay community.<sup>89</sup> Predominantly, this was about memorialising the gay liberation movement nationwide, by locating it in the place where the movement had been kick-started.<sup>90</sup> The statue was backed by a large number of influential gay leaders, including Frank Kameny, one of the early leaders of the movement, and David Rothenberg and Allen Roskoff, who were both established voices in the city's community.<sup>91</sup> Since Stonewall, the gay community's role in the city and neighbourhood had become ever more prominent, and the campaign marked that growth. It was supported by a number of New York politicians and public figures, such as Carol Greitzer, the city councilwoman for the district, as well as others from the City Council, the New York Civil Liberties Union and the mayor, Ed Koch.<sup>92</sup>

Just ten years previously, the first Christopher Street Liberation Day parades, since christened Pride, were drawing crowds of 20,000 at the most.<sup>93</sup> In 1979, the ten-year anniversary of Stonewall, and the year that the statue was commissioned, it was estimated that 100,000 people participated. The gay rights movement was increasingly confident on the national stage, with the San Francisco parade drawing crowds of up to twice that size, and large numbers attending a march in Washington D.C., urging the passage of federal legislation for gay rights.<sup>94</sup> In New York, Ed Koch had declared in his first days in office that

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<sup>88</sup> "'Greenwich Village Is Not Amused'"; Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>89</sup> Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>90</sup> P. Shehadi, 'Community Board Approves Christopher Park Statue', *Gay Community News*, (November 01, 1980).

<sup>91</sup> 'Gay Leaders Endorsing the Christopher Park Gay Pride Sculpture', (Mariposa Foundation), LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F12: Gay Liberation Statue.

<sup>92</sup> 'New Yorkers Endorsing'; Peters, 'Koch Supports Notion'.

<sup>93</sup> Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals'.

<sup>94</sup> 'Homosexuals' Parade Marks 10th Year of Rights Drive', *New York Times*, (June 25, 1979); J. Thomas, '75,000 March in Capital in Drive to Support Homosexual Rights', *New York Times*, (October 15, 1979).

he would issue an executive order prohibiting discrimination against people on the grounds of sexual orientation by the city government. Later in the year, the *New York Times* published an editorial supporting the passage of a wider-reaching law through the city council.<sup>95</sup>

Opposition within the neighbourhood from non-LGBT identifying groups was vocal. Many were resistant to any monument that celebrated the gay community, or the movement for gay liberation. A priest claimed that such a statue would “lure” children to homosexuality, something that had supposedly “wrecked the lives of thousands and broken the hearts of thousands more”. A local church group released a statement that the sculpture was too “copulatively suggestive”.<sup>96</sup> There was also opposition from some that was straightforwardly homophobic, without the religious justifications. One resident felt it would be “undesirable to attract large numbers of homosexuals” to the area, as it would result in bringing “prostitution” to the neighbourhood. Another example is that of Vera Schneider, the head of the “Friends of Christopher Park”. Schneider was alleged to have said that she would never support a statue dedicated to the “disgusting people” that had been in an “awful place” [the Stonewall Inn] on that night in 1969. When interviewed by the *Village Voice* over the statue she was more polite but no less opposed, claiming that the park should not have a statue dedicated to the “special interest” of just one of the neighbourhood’s groups.<sup>97</sup>

Opposition from Schneider, a member of groups of the sort Osman associated so strongly with the process, suggests that it was not a question of gentrification per se. She was supportive of public beautification and had been instrumental in securing funding for the park through her participation in neighbourhood groups.<sup>98</sup> It seems that to Schneider the statue, as a symbol of the growing influence of the gay community, simply represented the wrong kind of gentrification.<sup>99</sup> While gay people were increasingly accepted as being part of society, the thought that they, and their struggle, should be given prominence over non-gay residents was a step too far. In short, the question over whether

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<sup>95</sup> Editorial, 'A Fair Chance for Homosexuals', *New York Times*, (May 03, 1978).

<sup>96</sup> Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>97</sup> "'Greenwich Village Is Not Amused'".

<sup>98</sup> "'Greenwich Village Is Not Amused'".

<sup>99</sup> Schneider, 'Letter to Charles Persell'; Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 6, 128.



gay people could be allowed any ownership over the neighbourhood was answered with a 'no' by Schneider.

Along with the homophobic backlash related to the fear that the statue would encourage more LGBT people to come to the area, one resident, John Ferri, strikingly elucidated a worry that such an influx would result in "greedy landlords" raising rents, and that families like his would "have to leave" as a result.<sup>100</sup> The focus on rising housing prices, and his attribution of that to the landlords as much as LGBT people mean his words cannot simply be dismissed as homophobia. Ferri himself was a member of a community group, Citizens for a Better Village, which was predominantly composed of members of the Village's long-established working-class Italian-American population.<sup>101</sup> While his characterisation of the process putting the gay community and "families" in opposition is often a staple of homophobic attitudes, he was part of the community that had dominated Greenwich Village for the most part of its history. It was this community that could be seen to have been most justifiably anxious about the changes underway in the neighbourhood, with regards to their own ability to stay.<sup>102</sup>

The statue controversy coincided with a growing awareness of gentrification in the public. Since its initial coinage in 1964, the term had remained a niche interest even within academia. However, in 1979 the *New York Times* published its first article about the phenomenon, referring to the "Urban Renaissance" underway in the city. It described the movement of a "new professional upper class" into working-class neighbourhoods, renovating old buildings and the resultant effects on those areas. The article was supportive of the "movement" as it described it, referring to the transformation of "dismal districts" into "delightful neighbourhoods", and claiming that the "survival and recovery" of the city depended on it. It responded to fears about displacement and local unrest as a result by claiming that if the displaced had to move to the suburbs, there were "more jobs" for them there anyway. The main fear about

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<sup>100</sup> "'Greenwich Village Is Not Amused'".

<sup>101</sup> T. S. Purdum, 'Rights Unit Investigate Search at Social Club', *New York Times*, (February 01, 1986).

<sup>102</sup> White, *City Boy*, p. 14; Shelley, 'Catholic Greenwich Village', p. 60.

displacement was that the heterogeneity sought by those “homesteaders” in these areas would be lost, and thus make such areas less interesting to them.<sup>103</sup>

Letters written to the paper in response indicate that the phenomenon was already known in parts of the city, and was not thought of as positively as by the author of the *New York Times* article. Respondents argued that prior residents would lose out from the process and that gentrification would have negative impacts.<sup>104</sup> In later years, stories began to appear that emphasised the dramatic rise in prices to buy and rent in New York. One property manager claimed that apartments for rent at \$800 per month in 1982 would have been advertised for \$375 in 1978.<sup>105</sup> Thus, gentrification was a process of which people were increasingly aware. Moreover the citing of the gay community as a contributing demographic in the *New York Times* would have conferred a sense of legitimacy to Ferri’s fear of displacement by incoming gay residents.<sup>106</sup>

“Homosexuals” were becoming cited as a “substantial element” of the rising housing costs in the city in news reports about property values in the city.<sup>107</sup> In 1977, an in-depth article in the *New York Times* claimed the gay community’s growing influence and power in San Francisco was in large part due to its ability to raise large amounts of money for political campaigns. The article also described a “gay takeover” of black neighbourhoods in the city, in which “homesteading” gay men would “buy, decorate, upgrade and force out” existing residents.<sup>108</sup> Castells’ work published in 1983 that mapped the growth of the gay population in San Francisco studied the link between the community and gentrification academically. He further explored the association between gay populations and rising rents that was increasingly being drawn across the country.<sup>109</sup> Of course, not all gay men were disproportionately wealthy, but some within the community actively promoted the idea, with gay magazine, *The*

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<sup>103</sup> B. Fleetwood, 'The New Elite and an Urban Renaissance', *New York Times*, (January 14, 1979).

<sup>104</sup> W. Pellicone, 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Times*, (February 11, 1979); B. Dewing, 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Times*, (February 11, 1979); H. J. Gans, 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Times*, (February 11, 1979).

<sup>105</sup> L. Bennetts, 'If You're Thinking of Living In: Chelsea', *New York Times*, (May 02, 1982); E. E. Asbury, 'If You're Thinking of Living In: Greenwich Village', *New York Times*, (August 14, 1983).

<sup>106</sup> A. S. Oser, 'Apartment Crush Alters Manhattan Living', *New York Times*, (January 21, 1980).

<sup>107</sup> Oser, 'Apartment Crush'.

<sup>108</sup> H. Gold, 'A Walk on San Francisco's Gay Side', *New York Times*, (November 06, 1977).

<sup>109</sup> Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, pp. 158-61.

*Advocate*, advertising on the basis of its “affluent” readers.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the use of the slogan “Gay Money is Gay Power” by groups at gay pride marches furthered that perception in the city.<sup>111</sup> Along with the gay vote, the “gay dollar” was increasingly seen as a resource to exploit by city politicians, due to contemporary estimates of the average gay man’s earnings being 50% higher than the national average.<sup>112</sup>

Whether phrased in homophobic terms, or with regard to fears of rising housing and property costs in the Village, much of the criticism of the proposed statue from non-gay residents was on the basis that it would attract even more gay and LGBT people to the neighbourhood. In contrast, many of the arguments made in favour of the statue were phrased as an effort to increase the “visibility” and “recognition” of the community that already lived there.<sup>113</sup> After years of steadily increasing confidence, the statue marked a defining moment for the community to put down a permanent marker of their presence in the Village. The statue represented the fact that after many years living in the closet, the gay community in Greenwich Village had become large and confident enough to claim that recognition, to make Gay Greenwich Village, known in the vernacular culture, an officially recognised part of the fabric of New York City.<sup>114</sup>

## Conclusion

The decades after Stonewall saw a monumental shift in the profile of Greenwich Village. Edmund White was able to rent a one-bedroom apartment in the Village for just \$100 per month when he returned to the city in 1970.<sup>115</sup> In 1983, the average one-bedroom apartment was estimated to rent for \$800, more than twice the cost it would have been if it tracked the inflation rate.<sup>116</sup> The role of gay people was significant in this process. This is demonstrated by the actions of

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<sup>110</sup> The Advocate, 'Why Would a Gay Magazine Buy This \$18,000 Page in the New York Times?', *New York Times*, (April 07, 1981), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F3: 1981.

<sup>111</sup> 'Homosexuals' Parade Marks 10th Year'.

<sup>112</sup> R. Smothers, 'Goldin Would Include Homosexuals in Promoting City', *New York Times*, (September 20, 1979).

<sup>113</sup> Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>114</sup> N. C. Johnson, 'Mapping Monuments: The Shaping of Public Space and Cultural Identities', *Visual Communication*, 1 (2002), pp. 294-96.

<sup>115</sup> White, *City Boy*, p. 79.

<sup>116</sup> Asbury, 'If You're Thinking of Living In: Greenwich Village'; 'CPI Inflation Calculator', (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Craig Rodwell and his involvement in community organisation, within block associations and their work in trying to restore and retain the 'historic character' of the Village. The increasingly successful gay rights movement, of which he was a part, also had an impact. The gay community became a stronger political force within the city, and the basis of that power came from the Village. For example, in the 1992 Democratic Party presidential primary, leading candidates visited and met with gay leaders from the Village to burnish their credentials with gay voters.<sup>117</sup> Finally, the eventual success in building the *Gay Liberation* Monument in Christopher Park showed the increasing influence of the community within the neighbourhood itself. Despite opposition from well-connected figures of the area, eventually the monument was built, and physically commemorated the long association between the Village and the gay people.<sup>118</sup>

The LGBT community in Greenwich Village shared many considerable similarities with other traditional gentrifying groups. Thus, the applicability of Osman and others' formulations of this stage of gentrification is apt.<sup>119</sup> In the decades after Stonewall the LGBT community undoubtedly had a significant influence on the changes the neighbourhood underwent. However, in consideration of Castells' and Murphy's formulation that these activities had a political motive, it is less clear. During FAIRPAC's campaigning on the city charter, *OutWeek* published an editorial chastising the community for its lack of engagement with a process directly related to consolidating political power through residential concentration.<sup>120</sup> For many the draw of the Village was more due to the gay social life and amenities available there, than motivated by the political situation.<sup>121</sup>

Nonetheless, the community benefitted considerably from the presence of a reasonably coherent population in the Village. This is shown by the growth of the community as an electorally influential bloc, ACT UP's success in mobilising large numbers for its campaigns and the success of the plans for the statue in

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<sup>117</sup> T. S. Purdum, 'The 1992 Campaign: Voters; Democrats' Efforts to Lure Gay Voters Are Persistent but Subtle', *New York Times*, (April 07, 1992).

<sup>118</sup> C. Vogel, 'The Art Market', *New York Times*, (June 19, 1992).

<sup>119</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 116, 23, 32-33.

<sup>120</sup> Editorial, 'Vote "No"'.

<sup>121</sup> Cosentino, 'Charles Cosentino'; M. Signorile, 'Looking for Lube in All the Wrong Places', *OutWeek*, (July 31, 1989); France, *How to Survive a Plague*, p. 28.

Christopher Park.<sup>122</sup> By the time Segal's statue was installed in Christopher Park, the neighbourhood had become a centre for the community in the city and nationwide, and this had led to the creation of a powerful political and cultural identity. Thus, the gentrification of Greenwich Village by the LGBT population was substantively different to those enacted by other demographics. It helped strengthen and solidify the community's political and cultural strength at times of immense crisis, both during the gay liberation movement and the AIDS epidemic. This consolidated the status of Greenwich Village as the capital of LGBT life in New York City by the end of the 1980s.

Towards the end of this period, however, a sense developed that Greenwich Village was becoming increasingly expensive and "established" amongst some parts of the community.<sup>123</sup> Robert Pinter, a gay man who has lived for most of his life in the East Village after moving to New York in 1982 from Milwaukee, described his perception of Greenwich Village at the time as being "too established" and that he was drawn elsewhere, to the East Village, because of its "diversity" and "edginess".<sup>124</sup> Others expressed similar sentiments, criticisms of Greenwich Village as "expensive" were not uncommon, and the "bohemian" East Village was increasingly referred to as the fashionable neighbourhood for gay people.<sup>125</sup> Other areas in New York were also increasingly becoming home to gay and lesbian New Yorkers, as they sought to move to areas with lower rents, or searched for the different energies that places such as Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen and Park Slope, had to offer.<sup>126</sup> This movement impacted these areas and the gay community in different ways that further exemplify the continuing evolution of gentrification in New York City, and the role that LGBT people played in it.

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<sup>122</sup> Katz, 'Koch's Fall'; Purdum, 'The 1992 Campaign'; Kurtz, 'Gay Liberation Statue Set for Installation'.

<sup>123</sup> S. Ladd, 'Village Retail Life: Another AIDS Victim', *Newsday*, (May 11, 1987); Rodwell, 'Letter to the City Desk of New York Newsday'.

<sup>124</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>125</sup> Blotcher, 'Comrade in Arms', p. 48; France, *How to Survive a Plague*, p. 33.

<sup>126</sup> Whelan, 'Fairpac Lobbies'.

## **Chapter 2 – Gentrification and the LGBT Communities of Park Slope, Brooklyn and the East Village, Manhattan**

As Greenwich Village became increasingly gentrified in the years after the beginnings of the gay liberation movement, LGBT people living in, and moving to, New York City increasingly chose to live in other neighbourhoods in the city. Many looked to find something as close as possible to Greenwich Village, without having to pay the increasingly unaffordable rents. Others sought to move to new areas to play a part in creating a different kind of gay neighbourhood. Greenwich Village was increasingly seen as more established and dominated by white men. New neighbourhoods were thus seen as opportunities for other sections of the LGBT community, such as lesbians and transgender people to stake a claim and make a neighbourhood friendlier and more amenable to their needs. Notable areas for this discussion are Park Slope in Brooklyn and the East Village in Manhattan. Park Slope, while hosting a significant gay male population became known as the centre of the lesbian community in the city in the 1980s and 1990s. The East Village, through the development and success of the Pyramid Club, and the Wigstock festival that grew out of it, became known for drag, and a more radical approach to sexuality and gender. Both exemplify different ways that the LGBT community has influenced the progression of gentrification in New York. Examining the reasons for this is vital to enhance understanding of LGBT gentrification beyond the usual boundaries of the study of white gay men that studies like Castells' encompass.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to Castells' thesis that the gay male community was uniquely predisposed to gentrifying activity, this chapter shows that in the years after his study the lesbian and transgender communities also had notable impacts on gentrification in New York City.<sup>2</sup> It demonstrates that these communities had similar aesthetic values and cultural preferences to other early gentrifying groups.<sup>3</sup> However, the growth of separate LGBT communities in other neighbourhoods also facilitated the development of other identities, and

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<sup>1</sup> Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 116, 23, 32-33.

subsequently changed the nature of gentrification in these areas. In Park Slope, a lesbian community grew that depended less on large symbolic displays of power, and more on social networks and friendships.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, a gay male community grew in the neighbourhood that defined itself against the more radical politics coming out of the gay communities in Manhattan, seeking the creation of a more genteel community.<sup>5</sup> Contrastingly, in the East Village there developed a more radical LGBT counterculture in opposition to a perceived conservatism within the “established” Greenwich Village community.<sup>6</sup> In the East Village a community developed that was more welcoming to transgender people, and cultivated a more transgressive and radical cultural movement that became popular in the city. This shows that the LGBT role in gentrification in New York City was not limited to a single subset of the LGBT population or a single neighbourhood. It also shows that this role varied considerably in time and space. Nonetheless, there remain common strands, in the motives for such community development, and the resulting impact it had on LGBT identity and representation, city and nationwide.

This chapter first examines the development of the gay community in Park Slope, and the extent to which a growing lesbian community developed in this era, and how it differed from the more traditional male gay community living in the same neighbourhood at the same time. I draw from the archives of a predominantly male gay community organisation, *Gay Friends and Neighbors of Brooklyn*, local newspaper articles and LGBT community newsletters and magazines. I also explore a contemporaneous sociological study of the lesbian community of Park Slope. I then explore the impact of the community on the gentrification of the East Village. I draw on oral histories, the *New York Times* archives, as well as other primary materials from assorted archives. The section on East Village considers the impact of the Wigstock festival on the LGBT and wider neighbourhood population at the time. As it moved from the fringe to the mainstream, later drawing thousands, it serves as a useful analogy for the

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<sup>4</sup> Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends', p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors Reaching Out', *The Prospect Press*, (Jun. 27 - Jul. 17, 1985), pp. 1, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

success of the LGBT community in the neighbourhood during the same timeframe.

### Park Slope, Brooklyn

“No one apologises for living in Park Slope any more”, claimed Jon-David Nalley in a 1984 article describing the growing community of lesbian and gay people in the Brooklyn neighbourhood. He claimed that the neighbourhood was in the midst of a “transition between cool gentility and raucous speculation”. The LGBT population of the neighbourhood was, in the view of the article, present yet seemingly uninvolved in this process. The LGBT population was not part of the traditional “Irish working-class” or “vibrant Hispanic” communities, but nor were they the “callous yuppies” that were replacing the “bodegas and shoe repair shops” with “gentrified restaurants and bars”.<sup>7</sup> However, they were in fact very much involved in the changes underway in the neighbourhood. In many ways, this mirrored the impact that LGBT populations had on gentrification in Manhattan, through the community organising of the predominantly male Gay Friends and Neighbors of Brooklyn (GFN). However, Park Slope has also long been known as the centre of the lesbian population of New York, drawing the moniker “Dyke Slope” for many years from people within the community.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it serves as a necessary case study to question the extent to which one can speak of ‘LGBT’ involvement in gentrification, and examine the varying experiences and roles of different subsections of the broader community.

In 1983, Gay Friends and Neighbors in Brooklyn was founded by David Cantrell, in an effort to set up a social network for gay and lesbian people in Brooklyn that had less of a “heavy emphasis on sex”.<sup>9</sup> The stated mission of the group was to help people “find other gay individuals” with whom to “socialise”, with secondary objectives to provide “political, professional or business oriented” information for members of the community.<sup>10</sup> This was received well, as the gay bar and restaurant “scene” in Park Slope, and Brooklyn more widely

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<sup>7</sup> J.-D. Nalley, 'Gays on the Slope', *New York Native*, (Nov. 5 - 18, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Nalley, 'Gays on the Slope'; M. Cossey, 'Replanting the Rainbow Flag', *New York Times*, (Jan. 16, 2005); Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends'.

<sup>9</sup> Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors'. (Note – GFN initially formed as Gay Friends and Neighbors around Prospect Park, changed later to “... in Brooklyn”).

<sup>10</sup> 'About G.F.N.', *GFN Newsletter*, (May, 1984).



was minute in comparison with Manhattan.<sup>11</sup> The group was fairly successful, and between 1983 and 1989 grew from around 70 members to over 650. It drew in members from across the city, and in 1989 had over a hundred members living outside Brooklyn, and had spawned GFN groups in the Upper West Side of Manhattan and Queens.<sup>12</sup> Throughout this time however, the most common ZIP codes of members were from Park Slope and immediately adjoining neighbourhoods.<sup>13</sup> One needs to be careful to draw conclusions too readily about what that shows about where LGBT people were living, as GFN's meeting location and its main leaders were based in Park Slope. Nonetheless, it does reveal the neighbourhood to be a centre of the Brooklyn gay and lesbian community from an organisational, social and political perspective.

The group remained focused on the social aspect of its mission over the following years. It hosted a Pride festival in Brooklyn in 1985, which in the following years was predominantly an event focused around a picnic in Prospect Park, rather than the large parade that was the tradition in Manhattan. The political portion of the festival was less prominent and radical, and it was a more localised event as a result.<sup>14</sup> In an interview with a reporter for *The Prospect Press*, a Brooklyn community newspaper, one member spoke “resentfully” about the coverage of the parade in Manhattan for typically focusing on “screaming drag queens” rather than lawyers or members of “Dignity”, a gay catholic group.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that for some members of the community, moving to Brooklyn was not merely an escape from rising rent prices, but also the more radical politics that were fostered in Manhattan. Brooklyn represented a place that was sufficiently progressive that LGBT people were relatively safe to live openly, but also represented place to foster a more genteel gay community.

The group remained committed to fighting for gay rights however, and did not look to avoid confrontation at all costs.<sup>16</sup> GFN campaigned in Brooklyn

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<sup>11</sup> 'Hello G.F.N.', *GFN Newsletter*, (January, 1985); *Gayellow Pages: The N.Y.C./N.J. Edition*, (New York: Renaissance House, 1977), pp. 21-32.

<sup>12</sup> 'Around the Town', *GFN Newsletter*, (April, 1985); 'Gay Friends and Neighbors of Queens', *GFN Newsletter*, (June, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> GFN, 'Nov. 1983 Directory', (1983); GFN, '1986 Directory', (1986); GFN, 'All Club Members as of 9/24/89', (1989).

<sup>14</sup> L. Touby, 'A Brooklyn Day for Gay Pride', *The Phoenix*, (Jul. 2, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors'..

<sup>16</sup> Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors'..

for the passage of the long troubled lesbian and gay rights bill. Further more, much like with Osman's findings with 'brownstoners' elsewhere in Brooklyn, and the LGBT community in Greenwich Village, GFN was actively involved in neighbourhood politics. It was involved with efforts to "clean-up" Prospect Park, which adjoins Park Slope. It organised fundraising events for homeless charities operating in and around the park that sought to provide meals and shelter for rough sleepers in the park.<sup>17</sup> The group also held regular events to more actively "clean-up" as well, focusing on picking up litter and generally tidying the park. It co-ordinated its efforts with local churches and other organisations, and was positively cited by the city Parks Department for its efforts.<sup>18</sup>

These efforts were significant in the development and changes in the Park Slope neighbourhood in this era, and show that Nalley's omission of the role of the community in the gentrification of the area was mistaken. Jim Gigliello wrote one striking description of the changes that occurred in Park Slope in the ten years previously in a GFN newsletter in 1985. He had grown up in Park Slope as a child, and stated that when he was a teen a "gay scene in Brooklyn... simply did not exist". Describing the "tough, macho" neighbourhood, Gigliello wrote about how he previously called it "Park Slop". The part of the neighbourhood he described had since become "the expensive brownstone section". He recalled one story from his childhood in which he had been walking down the street with his school friends when they saw "two effeminate men" on the other side of the street. The group of boys then attacked the men with "bottles and bricks" while bystanders in the street cheered them on. For Gigliello, when the openly gay community began to grow in Park Slope as a result of people moving from Manhattan, he was naturally pleased. Cruising had become possible in the local area "seemingly overnight" and gay bars began opening in Brooklyn. He joined GFN immediately after reading about its founding in the *Native* and was an active participant.<sup>19</sup> Gigliello does not use the term gentrification, but is clearly describing the process as having been a good thing for the neighbourhood, linking the elimination of the "gang wars" of previous years with the rising house prices. Gigliello had not moved to the neighbourhood, and thus is not easily

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<sup>17</sup> GFN, 'Holiday Market: Help the Homeless in Park Slope', (1985).

<sup>18</sup> 'Outreach', *GFN Newsletter*, (August, 1984); Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors'.

<sup>19</sup> J. Gigliello, 'A Gay Grows in Brooklyn', *GFN Newsletter*, (July, 1985).

categorised as a 'gentrifier' in the traditional sense. Nonetheless, he clearly represents a section of the community for whom gentrification, at least when described with different terminology, was a good thing.

Along with the growing gay community in Park Slope at this time, as exemplified by the growth of GFN and its various successes in the local community, the area was increasingly known as the main centre of the lesbian population of New York. GFN, while being an organisation that was not exclusively composed of gay men, was almost entirely male. In 1983 on its membership directory of seventy people, there was just one woman.<sup>20</sup> In 1986 and 1989, there were more women in the organisation, but they still only numbered around ten per cent of the overall number on each occasion.<sup>21</sup> In later articles written for the lesbian community about the area, GFN does not get so much as a passing mention, in sections that refer to local community groups of interest.<sup>22</sup> For a neighbourhood that was being referred to as "Dyke Slope" at least as early as 1984, GFN does not seem to be wholly representative of the LGBT community of the area at the time.<sup>23</sup> Historically, this difference is not particularly anomalous. Throughout the history of the gay liberation movement into the 1980s and beyond, men dominated many campaign groups, and lesbians were often put off participation or drawn elsewhere as a result.<sup>24</sup>

This difference has often led scholars to assume that spatial concentration, campaigning, and other activities that were linked to 'gay gentrification' were peculiar to gay men. Castells postulated that it was due to a certain level of territorialism amongst men that led them to concentrate and claim space in a more assertive way, whereas lesbians were more "placeless".<sup>25</sup> Lauria and Knopp proposed a similar framework, tying it to a social need among men to have a safer space due to a sense that they are seen as more threatening to straight society, and therefore more threatened in return.<sup>26</sup> However, in a 1995 study interviewing lesbian residents of Park Slope, Tamar Rothenberg

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<sup>20</sup> GFN, 'Nov. 1983 Directory'.

<sup>21</sup> GFN, '1986 Directory'; GFN, 'All Club Members as of 9/24/89'.

<sup>22</sup> A. Svahn, "'Dyke Slope,' Brooklyn Is Lesbian Heaven', *Sappho's Isle*, (March, 1989); M. Sidell, 'Park Slope: Comfort and Compatibility', *Sappho's Isle*, (January, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Nalley, 'Gays on the Slope'.

<sup>24</sup> Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends', p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, p. 140.

<sup>26</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', p. 158.

concluded that lesbians had indeed been “active participants” in the gentrification of the neighbourhood, contrary to earlier assumptions.<sup>27</sup>

Rothenberg found that the lesbian role in the gentrification in Park Slope was harder to immediately identify for a number of reasons. She found that there was a “distinct lack of designated lesbian places” in the neighbourhood, which is a usual identifier for LGBT communities, given that census data is not available for mapping their spread. Furthermore, most interviewees seemed relatively disengaged from local community politics. Many were more comfortable describing a “concentration of lesbians” in Park Slope than of there being a “community” per se. Nonetheless, they all valued that concentration, and found that living in Park Slope was more comfortable for them. They were more confident walking down the street with their partners, and there were better services available to them as a result. What Rothenberg found was that lesbian involvement and impact on gentrification simply worked differently when acting not as a smaller part of predominantly male actions and campaigns. She emphasized that it was a process borne more from word-of-mouth, as many of their interviewees knew of the neighbourhood’s reputation before moving there, and cited it as a reason for doing so. Further more, as they would move from apartments and houses, they would tend to do their utmost to stay in the “Park Slope community”. This gradually expanded beyond ‘official’ Park Slope into adjacent neighbourhoods in the search for lower living costs, thereby further extending the gentrification process outwards from the neighbourhood.<sup>28</sup>

Anna Svahn exemplifies Rothenberg’s suggestion that word-of-mouth was significant in the development of Park Slope as a destination for lesbians in New York City. Writing in *Sappho’s Isle*, a New York based news magazine geared towards the lesbian ‘community’, Svahn moved to Park Slope after graduating after hearing “somewhere” about it having “a lot of lesbians”. Svahn described the surprise that a visiting friend had when she was cruised by four different women walking to her house in the neighbourhood. Svahn claimed that there was a “developed” political scene in the neighbourhood, though her main suggestion was Brooklyn Women’s Martial Arts (BWMA). Self-defence and anti-

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<sup>27</sup> Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends', p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends', pp. 169-79.

violence campaigning conducted by this group can to some extent be called political. However, there is not the same suggestion that it was as focused on political representation in the mould of more traditional LGBT campaigning groups that grew in other parts of the city. Once again, the overriding impression from the article is that the main impressions of the neighbourhood that drove its position as a “lesbian enclave” were its social aspects. Things as simple as the fact that they would feel safe and comfortable walking openly in couples was significant enough, and made Park Slope almost unique in the city.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, as with the experience of LGBT people in the rest of New York City, this “Lesbian Heaven” was not always so safe or welcoming.<sup>30</sup> Lesbians were also targets of homophobic violence, and the supposedly progressive non-gay residents of the area were not heroic defenders, as with elsewhere. One particular attack was documented in *OutWeek*, and described “yuppie patrons...peppering their eggs” while women were being violently assaulted in a Park Slope diner. This was once again met with an insufficient response from the NYPD, who *OutWeek* accused of doing little to protect the lesbian population in the neighbourhood.<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately however, the lesbian population continued to grow, indicating that Park Slope still felt safer there than elsewhere in the city. Another later article in the same publication by Martha Sidell confirmed much of what Svahn wrote about. Much of it mirrored the imagery of Svahn’s piece, literally in reference to the “tree-lined streets” of the neighbourhood as a big draw.<sup>32</sup> Allusions to the style of the neighbourhood feature in both, albeit more strongly in Sidell’s article. The article reads almost as an advertisement for the area. Referring to the charming “brownstone walk-ups” and its “artsy flavor”, the article makes a strong case for the attractions of the area itself, while noting the “easy commute into Manhattan”. It further draws attention to the “highly divergent ages, classes and ethnicity of the area”, seemingly ticking every item on the list of the desires of the typical Brooklyn ‘brownstoner’.<sup>33</sup> It also refers to its

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<sup>29</sup> Svahn, “Dyke Slope”.

<sup>30</sup> Svahn, “Dyke Slope”.

<sup>31</sup> Seyda, ‘Park Slope Journal’, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> Sidell, ‘Park Slope’; Svahn, “Dyke Slope”.

<sup>33</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 10.

“free and easy relaxed style of living”, perhaps a further indication of the less politically active climate in the neighbourhood. Indeed, the neighbourhood population was mocked within the radical Manhattan magazine *OutWeek* in comparison with “trendy urban ACT UP dykes” as women that “exorcise their libido at the women’s martial arts school” and shop at the “fascist food co-op”.<sup>34</sup>

Park Slope represented an opportunity for LGBT people to form communities away from the both established, radical, and, in the case of the lesbian community, male dominated community in Greenwich Village. The “relaxed” style of living in Brooklyn, at least compared to Manhattan was clearly appealing to a considerable number of LGBT people at this time.<sup>35</sup> This demonstrates that the ‘LGBT community’ of New York was heterogeneous and did not act in a uniform way. Another key neighbourhood that displays the heterogeneity within the community is the East Village, although with a significant difference. Whereas Park Slope represented a more genteel version of an LGBT neighbourhood, the East Village saw the growth of a community yet more radical than that based in Greenwich Village at the time.

### The East Village, Manhattan

“I see them walking down the street in identical blue suits with their briefcases and I think, ‘There goes the neighbourhood,’”. “It’s the East Village to the real estate brokers... To us it’s the Lower East Side”. So said two long time residents of the area in a *New York Times* article about the “gentrification” of the area in 1984.<sup>36</sup> Despite the interviewees’ suggestion that it was a recent invention, the term “East Village” had entered usage some years earlier. The *Times* reported on the area under that name as early as 1967.<sup>37</sup> Despite assertions to the contrary, the name seems to stem from the growing populations of “Beats” and “hippies” that moved to the area in that era.<sup>38</sup> They sought to draw the link with Greenwich Village’s radical history, seeing themselves as the area’s “authentic population”. The new name distinguished them from the “old world immigrants”

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<sup>34</sup> Madam X, 'Her Royal Hypeness', *OutWeek*, (April 04, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Sidell, 'Park Slope'.

<sup>36</sup> L. Belkin, 'The Gentrification of the East Village', *New York Times*, (September 02, 1984).

<sup>37</sup> S. Fox, 'The 2 Worlds of the East Village', *New York Times*, (June 05, 1967).

<sup>38</sup> J. Strausbaugh, 'Paths of Resistance in the East Village', *New York Times*, (September 14, 2007).

in the Lower East Side, and brought them closer to Greenwich Village, at least in their imagination.<sup>39</sup>

The different terms had seemingly become shibboleths for which side of the process the user was part of, and the finer details of when the term “East Village” arrived was not so important for those that opposed its use. However, the dichotomy was not so simple as an opposition between the traditional “poor immigrant” communities and real estate speculators and “yuppies” in suits.<sup>40</sup> Occupying a space in between the two communities was a population of LGBT people that were increasingly prominent in the life of the area. Some had been a part of that initial movement from Greenwich Village in the sixties, but their numbers began increasing noticeably in the 1980s. Such people were drawn to the area for its radical “Village” history, and as such referred to it as the “East Village” despite the fact few of them could have been called “yuppies” in suits. For them, much like those who initially coined the name, the East Village name represented an effort that grew amongst the LGBT population of the East Village to act as a countercultural foil to Greenwich Village. Much like Brooklyn represented a chance to create a less radical LGBT community in New York, the East Village was to serve to do the opposite for the LGBT population that moved there.

In the 1984 article, the *Times* defined the East Village as lying “between Third Avenue and Avenue A, 14<sup>th</sup> and Houston Streets”. This excluded the area to the east, from Avenue A to the East river, variously known as Alphabet City or Loisaida, another opposition that distinguished newcomers from the traditional predominantly Hispanic population of the area.<sup>41</sup> While each term is still somewhat in use, both are typically superseded by the term East Village. The term is often now used to describe the entire area between 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and the East River, and Houston and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, displaying the success of the East Village name.<sup>42</sup> In the interests of clarity, I will use the modern definition of the

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<sup>39</sup> Editorial, 'Why an East Village Newspaper?', *The East Village Other*, (u.d., M&A Div., NYPL, LGBT Periodicals Collection, B113, F4: The East Village Other.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *New Urban Frontier*, p. 8; Belkin, 'Gentrification of the East Village'.

<sup>41</sup> L. W. Foderaro, 'Will It Be Loisaida or Alphabet City?; Two Visions Vie in the East Village', *New York Times*, (May 17, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> Editorial, 'East Village NYC Neighborhood Guide', *Compass.com*; Drew, 'The East Village Neighborhood Guide: The Best Bits'.

East Village when using the term, with other terms when necessary for additional specificity.

There are many indications in *OutWeek* that the LGBT population of the East Village was increasing from a low base at this time, and seem to be part of this gentrification process in the area. There were articles describing the East Village in critical terms for its perceived “once hot’n’heavy... newly mainstreamed” aspects, also of the people moving there living in “ugly” housing that “your grandparents probably turned down”.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, many articles celebrated the growing gay community in the area, and the area was one of the most oft-advertised in classified advertisements for apartments to rent and to buy.<sup>44</sup> There were also articles written by movers to the area describing some of the issues present in living in an area with a smaller LGBT community, one such example being an author’s struggles in finding sexual lubricant in the neighbourhood.<sup>45</sup> One example of gentrification in the East Village is the description of the theatre Café Olé in a theatre review in *Outweek*, praising the “secondhand furniture” and occurrence of “non-conformist themes”, while drawing attention to the fact that the theatre had to move several times around the East Village due to rent increases.<sup>46</sup> This serves as a useful reminder of the variance in tastes that existed within the ‘community’ at large in the city. It helps to explain why an area like the East Village was developed in the way that it was rather than simply an extension of Greenwich Village as some of its earliest arrivals intended. Rather, it served as a place for those who did not fit so easily into the Greenwich Village mould, to express their version of how a gay neighbourhood could look.

In 1982 Robert Pinter, a gay man originally from Milwaukee, moved to an apartment in the Alphabet City/Loisaida section of the East Village, within a block of Tompkins Square Park. Paying \$260 per month for a one-bedroom apartment, Pinter was drawn to the area for its “diversity” and “edginess”.

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<sup>43</sup> A. Miller, 'Look Out', *OutWeek*, (August 21, 1989), p. 42; A. Miller, 'I Was Just Wondering', *OutWeek*, (October 15, 1989), p. 42; J. Umlaut, '20 Downtown Warnings', *OutWeek*, (October 15, 1989), p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> R. Sugden, 'Bunny's Obsession! Rick Sugden Talks to Wigstock's Lady in Question About Her Annual East Village Ritual', *OutWeek*, (September 04, 1989), p. 39; 'Apartments for Rent', p. 61; 'Apartments for Sale', p. 62; 'Apartments for Rent', p. 63; 'Apartments for Rent', pp. 75, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Signorile, 'Looking for Lube', pp. 48, 74.

<sup>46</sup> J. Wasser, 'Performance: Cafe Olé', *OutWeek*, (October 08, 1989), pp. 54, 78.



Pinter's recollections of the area at the time are dominated by memories of cars on cinder blocks, buildings with smashed windows and people "shooting up in the hallways". Many of his friends would not want to visit him, afraid of venturing east of First Avenue due to the area's reputation. Despite this he was not put off from living there, and indeed this contributed to the feeling of "edginess" that he described so fondly. Further, as a gay man, he felt "willing to take more risks" with where he lived due to his lack of children or intention to ever have any, and his willingness to "fix up" his apartment. The apartment had previously been used as a studio space for an artist couple that had left it in a state of disrepair. Pinter started renovating his apartment shortly after moving in, sanding the floor and painting the walls, actions fairly typical of gentrifiers in their new homes.<sup>47</sup> Pinter in many ways encapsulates the stereotypical 'gay gentrifier', unattached to a larger family, and in search of areas that are typically more diverse and offer more social spaces in which to meet people in similar situations.<sup>48</sup>

Contrasting with the description of the crime and degradation in the area when he arrived, are Pinter's descriptions of the nightlife in the East Village during the 1980s. It is the cultural side of the East Village, particularly its history of "avant-garde" clubs, that were more welcoming to a more diverse clientele, which is now often used to sell the area.<sup>49</sup> Modern guides to the neighbourhood often refer to the East Village's history of "creative, gritty and independent energy".<sup>50</sup> For Pinter, the "epitome" of the East Village at this time was the Pyramid Club.<sup>51</sup> The club did not serve a specifically LGBT clientele, but also avant-garde artists, drag performers and socially liberal people. It has been associated with the early careers of many notable artists from the East Village in this era, such as Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and David Wojnarowicz.<sup>52</sup> It

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<sup>47</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>48</sup> Lauria and Knopp, 'Toward an Analysis', pp. 152-53.

<sup>49</sup> P. Hedlund, 'Push to Make Pyramid Club City's First 'Drag Landmark'', *The Villager*, (December 05, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> , 'East Village'; C. Black, 'The New York Neighborhood Where the Art Bookstore Is Alive and Well', *New York Times*, (June 15, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>52</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'; S. Lotringer and C. McCormick, 'Carlo McCormick', in *David Wojnarowicz: A Definitive History of Five or Six Years on the Lower East Side*, ed. by S. Lotringer and G. Ambrosino (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2006), pp. 11-13.

was in the Pyramid Club that RuPaul started their career as perhaps the most prominent drag performer in the world.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, for Shannon Harrington, a transgender woman who was a regular patron of the club in the 1980s, it was a more welcoming environment than exclusively gay bars in other parts of the city.<sup>54</sup> It is this connection with drag and “gender fluidity” that connects the Pyramid Club with perhaps the most significant LGBT contribution to the East Village during the 1980s and 90s, Wigstock.<sup>55</sup>

In 1984, after the Pyramid Club closed for the night, a group of its “denizens” congregated in the bandstand in Tompkins Square Park to continue the party into the night. That night, so the story goes, “someone suggested having a drag oriented parody of Woodstock”.<sup>56</sup> As such, the title *Wigstock* was an obvious choice, and the park was chosen as the location. The first Wigstock was held on August 18, 1985, and within ten years it drew audiences of over twenty thousand people.<sup>57</sup> Wigstock quickly became the second largest LGBT event in the New York calendar, after the Pride parade that finished in Greenwich Village after travelling down Fifth Avenue. Greenwich Village had become seen as the capital of the conventional gay world to those living in the East Village, and the Pride parade was compared to Wigstock in similar ways.<sup>58</sup> Lady Bunny, the main organiser of the festival, referred to it as a “hipper version of Gay Pride Day”, which they criticised for its embracing of ex-military servicemen as revealing it to be insufficiently radical.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, an open-air festival, featuring drag performers in the middle of the day was radical from the start, given Drag’s historic association with late night bars and clubs.<sup>60</sup> As the Pride parade had helped improve the visibility of gay men, Wigstock looked to do the same for those further towards the fringes of the LGBT community.

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<sup>53</sup> J. Conrad, 'What Happened in New York between 1981 and 1983', *New York Times*, (April 17, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> S. Harrington, 'Interview with Shannon Harrington', int. by A. J. Lewis, NYPL Community Oral History Project, NYC Trans Oral History Project, (July 26, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'; Hedlund, 'Push to Make Pyramid Club'.

<sup>56</sup> B. Van Parys, 'Wild About Wigstock', *QW*, (September 06, 1992), Wigstock Online Archive.

<sup>57</sup> T. Rubnitz, 'Wigstock: The Movie', (1987); M. Howe, 'Neighborhood Report: West Village Update; Wigstock Gets a Waterfront Home', *New York Times*, (August 28, 1994); R. Scott Gerdes, 'At Wigstock '97', *Transgender Tapestry*, (Spring, 1998), Digital Transgender Archive.

<sup>58</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>59</sup> Van Parys, 'Wild About Wigstock'; K. Mason, 'Drag Queen for a Day: Lady Bunny Is the Energizer Behind 'Fest of Love & Wigs'', *New York Daily News*, (September 02, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> B. Shils, 'Wigstock: The Movie', (The Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1995).

The festival was not without opposition. Despite examples of the wider neighbourhood population embracing the event, there were some who were more ambivalent about it.<sup>61</sup> In Barry Shils' 1995 documentary about the festival, *Wigstock: The Movie*, a man is featured who declares that, while "it was fun to watch", he did not much like the idea of the festival. He complained that the acts sung "queer music" and that he did not want to hear it. Another person interviewed for the film said that while many in the neighbourhood did not mind the festival, people who attended the festival "come from out of the neighbourhood".<sup>62</sup> For a festival with attendance as high as Wigstock, that claim is hard to disprove, and Shils' film does feature a couple who journeyed from San Diego. Nonetheless, the statement was made to disassociate the neighbourhood from the festival, which indicates the interviewee's true feelings about the event. There were also examples when opposition to the festival was more severe. In 1989, there was a violent episode, when "assailants... yelling anti-gay epithets" attacked a group of festival attendees. According to one of the victims, one of the perpetrators of the attack had shouted, along with homophobic abuse, for the targets to "get out of our park". To make matters worse, another member of the crowd was arrested after trying to alert the police to what had happened.<sup>63</sup> While the attackers were also arrested, the arrest of the bystander suggests that the police department still had institutional distrust of the LGBT community, and were not intent on protecting their right to the public space that was the park.

Some of its performers claimed that the festival represented a fight against the "yuppies" who were responsible for the steadily increasing gentrification of the area.<sup>64</sup> A report of the 1987 festival in *Screw* magazine stated that "any real estate speculators in the crowd" would have been "in tears" and that "Yuppiefiers... fled with strollers in tow". This was because, according to the article, "Gender rearrangement and gentrification make only the uneasiest of

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<sup>61</sup> E. Acevedo, 'Neighbors Reject New York's Sacrifice of Tompkins Sq. Park', *New York Times*, (October 13, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Shils, 'Wigstock: The Movie'.

<sup>63</sup> G. Rotello, 'Gay Bashing Mars Wigstock Festival: Hundreds Protest Attack in Tompkins Square', *OutWeek*, (September 18, 1989), pp. 12-14.

<sup>64</sup> S. S. Edgecomb, 'Still Ridiculous: The Legacy of Charles Ludlam and the Ridiculous Theatre Movement, 1987-2007', (Tufts University, 2009), p. 151.

bedfellows”.<sup>65</sup> The organiser, Lady Bunny echoed that in an interview in 1992, on the festival’s return to Tompkins Square Park after a year in Union Square. They praised Tompkins Square as the perfect location because of its “feeling of nitty-gritty”, because attendees could simply “bum right over from your scuzzy East Village apartment”.<sup>66</sup>

However, in the same interview, they drew attention to the fact that the festival had now attracted “corporate sponsors”, and the sound system for that year’s festival cost almost ten times as much as the entire budget for the first one. It is also worth noting that the year in Union Square was caused by the renovation of Tompkins Square Park, in short having its homeless population, and the bandstand that had sheltered it, removed.<sup>67</sup> This renovation was harshly criticised by Neil Smith as emblematic of the “ethos of the revanchist city” a term he used to describe pro-gentrification policies of the New York City government in this period.<sup>68</sup> Thus, despite claims to the contrary, Wigstock does not seem to have necessarily been a force that opposed the gentrification of the East Village. Indeed, its invitation to return to the park the following year suggests it was at the very least accepted by the city as not harming the reputation of the neighbourhood. The return to Tompkins Square after its “clean-up” draws the claim from the *Screw* article into question. If the festival truly represented the “nitty-gritty” side of the East Village, it may not have been so welcome at the newly renovated and sanitised park. This is, however, likely in large part due to the success of the festival, and of drag in American media more widely. In 1987, that may have been at least truer than in 1992, however. In those five years, RuPaul had become a national star, and *Vogue* was writing about drag having claimed a place in the “mainstream”.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, Wigstock formed a part of the transformation of the area from being a part of the Lower East Side to the East Village of today, a neighbourhood with enough ‘edge’ to be interesting, but safe enough for families to live. Rather than causing controversy with the city government, the Manhattan borough

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<sup>65</sup> R. Stewart, 'Sex Scene: Crass Dressing', *Screw*, (October 05, 1987), Wigstock Online Archive.

<sup>66</sup> G. Trebay, 'A Good Hair Day', *The Village Voice*, (September 08, 1992).

<sup>67</sup> Trebay, 'Good Hair Day'.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *New Urban Frontier*, pp. 220-21.

<sup>69</sup> H. Muschamp, 'Features: Now & Then', *Vogue*, (January 01, 1991), p. 188.

president actively embraced the festival for its “rebirth of gay pride” in the neighbourhood, and wrote an open letter inviting “all New Yorkers” to attend.<sup>70</sup> Responses included one from a local resident praising the festival as a success for the neighbourhood, with their only criticism being that more was not done to make the park more amenable to families with children like theirs.<sup>71</sup> In the media, *Vanity Fair* in 1992 said “Drag is not just more socially acceptable now: it’s the baton twirler at the head of the parade”.<sup>72</sup> Much of this reception led later performers at the festival to sing about it being “okay to be gay on Avenue A”, and that it was “in to be gay in the 90s”.<sup>73</sup>

### Conclusion

The LGBT community was not so significant in the gentrification of the East Village as it was in Greenwich Village. The community was smaller, and not as long established in this period. However, they were not passive bystanders in an area being gentrified by other groups and interests, as suggested by their invisibility in other studies of gentrification in the area.<sup>74</sup> This is due to the gap in which many members of the community fell, in not quite being visibly “yuppie-ish”, or *of* the traditional communities that had lived in the area when it was known as the Lower East Side. Nor were they entirely victims and enemies of the process either, as some others have suggested.<sup>75</sup> Instead the community was, in many respects an uneasy bedfellow of other influences in gentrifying the area, most notably in the case of Wigstock. Many of those that were involved with the festival declared it to be an enemy of the process. However, it benefitted in many ways from policies that were designed to aid the gentrification of the neighbourhood. Further, it helped to solidify the image of the East Village as the radical and exciting alternative to Greenwich Village in an era when increasing numbers of LGBT people were looking for less established neighbourhoods elsewhere in the city. It was also at a time when the community was increasingly

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<sup>70</sup> R. Messinger, 'Letter to the Editor: Event in Tompkins Sq. Celebrated Gay Pride', *New York Times*, (September 27, 1990).

<sup>71</sup> Acevedo, 'Neighbors Reject New York's Sacrifice'.

<sup>72</sup> Muschamp, 'Now & Then', p. 188; M. Musto, 'Wigging Out', *Vanity Fair*, (November, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> Shils, 'Wigstock: The Movie'.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, *New Urban Frontier*, pp. 3-30.

<sup>75</sup> Strausbaugh, 'Paths of Resistance'.

displaying its heterogeneity, as Wigstock brought voices from outside the traditional centre of Greenwich Village to mainstream attention. This allowed for members of the community, who felt like outsiders in other traditional gay spaces in the city, to feel more welcome there. The growth of the community in the East Village thus played a significant role in facilitating greater visibility and confidence of previously marginal groups in the LGBT community.

In Park Slope, many of those LGBT people living in the neighbourhood at this time, much like those in Greenwich Village, displayed many similar traits to classic first-wave gentrifiers. The GFN campaigned on community politics, organising events to fundraise and assist the homeless populations in the neighbourhood, and volunteering to “clean-up” Prospect Park.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, the aesthetic tastes displayed by lesbian authors in their descriptions of Park Slope as a desirable place to live displayed many similarities to those Osman found amongst other demographics in Brooklyn. The impact that gentrification had in Park Slope, to which LGBT people have been shown to have contributed, was significant in raising property values. This was best exemplified by Rothenberg’s description of the Park Slope lesbian community as gradually covering a larger and larger area than the geographic boundaries of the neighbourhood due to the increasing cost of living there.<sup>77</sup> The intent to remain part of the ‘community’ while leaving Park Slope itself, shows it represented a valuable space for lesbians in New York to develop a community aside from the male dominated Greenwich Village. However, Due to the smaller and less well-established history of LGBT people in Park Slope the political aspect of the process was less prominent in the process there. Nonetheless, in their campaigning on the New York City charter FAIRPAC cited the neighbourhood as one that they felt deserved “redistricting protections” for the sake of the LGBT community.<sup>78</sup>

These case studies show that the impact that LGBT had on gentrification in New York varied significantly across the city. It took on different characteristics in different places and when different communities within ‘the community’ were involved. In Park Slope, a more genteel vision of an LGBT neighbourhood developed, based around the increased distance from

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<sup>76</sup> GFN, 'Holiday Market: Help the Homeless in Park Slope'; Gross, 'Gay Friends and Neighbors'.

<sup>77</sup> Rothenberg, 'She Told Two Friends', p. 177.

<sup>78</sup> Whelan, 'Fairpac Lobbies', p. 24.

Manhattan. This showed to be a draw for lesbians, as the growth of the area's moniker "Dyke Slope" attests.<sup>79</sup> In the East Village, just as it had with the beatniks of the 1960s, a counterculture developed based on a more radical vision of what LGBT culture should be. This displays the diversity within the LGBT population in this period, and problematises any attempt to generalise the community or its role in gentrification.

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<sup>79</sup> Svahn, "Dyke Slope".

### **Chapter 3 – Later gentrification’s effects on the LGBT Community**

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Robert Pinter visited The Blue Door, an adult video store in the East Village.<sup>1</sup> He was browsing the collection when a “young, cute guy” approached and flirted with him. Feeling as though it was his “lucky day”, the fifty-two-year-old Pinter agreed to have sex with him. As they were leaving the store, the man offered to pay \$50 to Pinter for doing so. Describing the offer as “weird”, Pinter asserted that any chance of anything happening was now gone, but decided to walk the other man to his car and tell him then. However, just after leaving the immediate vicinity of the shop, he was tackled to the ground by “six huge guys” and bundled into the back of a van. After repeated questions from Pinter, the group identified themselves as undercover policemen from the NYPD’s vice department. Pinter had been arrested under suspicion of “loitering for the purpose of soliciting prostitution”.<sup>2</sup> It later transpired that the arrest was part of a campaign by the city government and NYPD to shut down adult video stores in Manhattan, citing complaints by local residents. The series of arrests almost exclusively targeted gay men, and were in many ways emblematic of the changing state of gentrification in New York. As formerly ‘bad’ neighbourhoods were increasingly sanitised, communities that had contributed to that development were later marginalised themselves in service of ever greater neighbourhood transformation.

In recent years, much of the literature has drawn attention to the increasing willingness of city governments to get directly involved in gentrifying neighbourhoods in major cities. Economic realities facing city administrations have led them to increasingly look at ways to attract investors, and then wealthy new residents and tourists.<sup>3</sup> As a result, developing neighbourhoods to sell to wealthier people as safe and sanitized, but also novel and interesting has become

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<sup>1</sup> A. Humm, 'Police Charged with False Arrests of Gay Men at Adult Video Stores', *Gotham Gazette*, (Feb 02, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>3</sup> Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, p. 105; D. Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 71 (1989), p. 9.



a priority.<sup>4</sup> As demonstrated by the marketing of the East Village analysed in the previous chapter, neighbourhoods with histories of LGBT activism in many ways fit the desired mould. As gentrification has expanded with the help of the city government, this chapter analyses the impact that government policies and their outcomes have had on LGBT people living in New York. This chapter shows that despite the numerous advances that have been made in gay rights since Stonewall, at times the community has been seen as an easy target by the city government. It also assesses the impact that gentrification's advance has had on the community and its political and cultural identity in recent years. As has been shown, the formation of strong LGBT communities in neighbourhoods in New York has been significant for the community historically. Thus, this chapter assesses the significance of the fragmentation and breakdown of these communities as a result of gentrification's intensification.

This chapter draws on evidence from a number of sources. This includes oral histories, specifically a semi-structured interview I conducted with Pinter at his East Village apartment in 2017 and an interview of Jimmy Wright conducted by the NYPL. It also considers the "personal intellectual memoir" of Sarah Schulman, which considers her personal history as well as her own analysis of that.<sup>5</sup> These sources provide insight into the lived experience of the expansion of gentrification in neighbourhoods beyond the means of many long-term LGBT residents. This is supplemented with contemporaneous news reports, from the *New York Times* and other local and LGBT community newspapers. These provide important contextualisation and verification of the retrospective sources that form the basis of much of the analysis in this chapter.

The chapter first investigates the story of Pinter's arrest by the NYPD as part of an effort to shut down adult video stores across the city. This shows the brutality with which the LGBT community is still treated by the department at

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<sup>4</sup> N. Smith, 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode*, 34 (2002), p. 442; K. S. Shaw and I. W. Hagemans, 'Gentrification without Displacement' and the Consequent Loss of Place: The Effects of Class Transition on Low-Income Residents of Secure Housing in Gentrifying Areas', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39 (2015), pp. 333-34; R. Gordon, F. L. Collins, and R. Kearns, 'It Is the People That Have Made Glen Innes': State-Led Gentrification and the Reconfiguration of Urban Life in Auckland', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41 (2017), pp. 770-73; M. Bernt, 'The 'Double Movements' of Neighbourhood Change: Gentrification and Public Policy in Harlem and Prenzlauer Berg', *Urban Studies*, 49 (2012), pp. 3053-54.

<sup>5</sup> Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, pp. 38-39.

times, a mark of continued institutionalised homophobia. It also displays the increasingly interventionist approach of the city government in seeking to facilitate gentrification. The chapter then considers broader consequences of gentrification for the LGBT community and its impact on community politics, social life and culture in these symbolic centres of LGBT history in the city. This is supplemented with a section problematising the extent to which this analysis is aided by a blanket characterisation of an “LGBT community”, given the numerous examples of divisions and segmentation within the LGBT population throughout its history.

### The LGBT Community, Policing, and Gentrification

Repressive policies towards LGBT people in New York can be traced back to the Giuliani administration. Elected in 1994 on a socially conservative Law and Order platform, he pledged a “better quality of life” for “conventional members of society”. Neil Smith situated this as part of a wider pattern of “revanchism” in major cities in the west that sought to reverse a “supposed theft” of urban neighbourhoods from traditional families.<sup>6</sup> In New York, the widely debated “Zero Tolerance” approach to policing constituted a core element of such policies, whereby minor “quality of life” offenses were severely punished in an effort to reduce crime more widely. Regardless of the debates as to its effectiveness, it was certainly negatively received by minority communities.<sup>7</sup> One such example was the homeless population as policies, that criminalised essentially every aspect of their life, were justified with a language of opposing their “deviance”.<sup>8</sup> Later, similar techniques were used in the campaigns against adult video stores, which had become ubiquitous in neighbourhoods with large gay populations, for example Greenwich Village, the East Village and Chelsea.

An early policy that was directed against porn shops by the Giuliani administration was the “sixty-forty” law, which stipulated that sixty per cent of any video store’s content had to be non-X-rated. Most stores circumvented this

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *New Urban Frontier*, pp. 44-45, 211.

<sup>7</sup> N. Fyfe, ‘Zero Tolerance: Maximum Surveillance? Deviancy, Difference and Crime Control in the Late Modern City’, in *The Emancipatory City? Paradoxes and Possibilities*, ed. by L. Lees (London: Sage, 2004), pp. 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> D. Mitchell, ‘The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States’, *Antipode*, 29 (1997), p. 305.

rule by putting large amounts of unpopular material, such as “instructional golf videos” towards the back of the store, and prominently situating the forty per cent of adult content at the front. As a result, by the early years of the Bloomberg administration, such stores were still successfully operating across the city. Thus, the city government and conservative community organisations intensified their efforts to eliminate them from the city. In 2004, a community task force was formed in Greenwich Village to work with the NYPD and the justice department to try and shut down more stores, or “at least make their existence miserable”.<sup>9</sup> In 2005, a store was successfully shuttered in Chelsea after an operation that saw a plainclothes policeman “solicited” by a male prostitute in the store. As a result of the following arrest, and previous ones that had been made in the same vicinity, the order was issued under the city’s Nuisance Abatement Law, which cited the store as a hotspot for prostitution in the neighbourhood.<sup>10</sup> The city seemed to have found a new mechanism for shutting down these supposed problem stores.

When Pinter was arrested in 2008, he had no idea that his arrest was part of a wider pattern replicated across the city. After his arrest, he was charged with soliciting prostitution. He was in fear for his livelihood (as a massage therapist such a conviction would strip him of his license and ruin his business). He thus followed his public defender’s advice to take a plea deal; this reduced the charge to one of “disorderly conduct”.<sup>11</sup> He was made to attend city-sponsored classes on “how to engage in prostitution more safely”, and provided he was not arrested again in six months, his record would be sealed and no further action would be taken.<sup>12</sup> However, after he spoke with some gay rights activist friends, he contacted Duncan Osborne, a journalist working for *Gay City News* about what had happened. After some research into recent court records, he and Osborne discovered that there had been a “spike” of arrests around the Blue Door, and “five other stores” in the city in 2008. They found that the arrests followed a similar pattern, with undercover police officers approaching customers in the

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<sup>9</sup> J. Steinhauer, 'In the Village, Sex Shops Multiply and Test a Neighborhood's Tolerance', *New York Times*, (Sep. 27, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> J. Siegel, 'Chelsea Adult Video Store Is Closed after Prostitution Bust', *The Villager*, (Jun. 22-28, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>12</sup> Humm, 'Police Charged'.

shops and convincing them to leave, later offering money for doing so. They then arrested the men shortly after leaving the shop, so as not to alert the owners to what was going on. Pinter and Osborne found that in tandem with the arrests, the city had filed nuisance abatement lawsuits against all six stores, citing the arrests as evidence to the claim that the stores should be closed down.<sup>13</sup>

Shocked by their discovery, Pinter withdrew his guilty plea, moved to have his case dismissed. This marked his first foray into activism, forming the “Campaign to Stop the False Arrests” to raise awareness of what was happening. Osborne published articles to raise publicity, and soon the case became important news in New York, particularly in the LGBT community.<sup>14</sup> This included the findings that older men were predominantly targeted by the operation, on the basis that they were more likely to respond to younger men showing interest.<sup>15</sup> This displayed a noticeable divergence from previous trends in prostitution arrests in the city. Eight of the twelve arrests that were made in The Blue Door were men over forty-two, compared to seventeen per cent in city-wide arrests for prostitution.<sup>16</sup> With the success of the media campaign and the resulting outrage in the community, the operation was effectively ended in February 2009, Pinter’s plea was vacated, and the case dismissed in June 2009.<sup>17</sup>

However, Pinter was not satisfied with the simple dismissal of the case and filed a lawsuit against the city for wrongful arrest. As a result, the city had to hand over documents that further uncovered the extent of the operation, and how high it went in the city government. The files showed that in 2008, 41 men were arrested in the adult stores across the city, just two of whom had previous prostitution arrests.<sup>18</sup> They followed the same blueprint in almost every case, at times several people would be arrested in an afternoon, then the NYPD would return a few days later and do the same. Pinter even found arrest reports that, except for the names, were verbatim to his own in the description of the crime.

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<sup>13</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'..

<sup>14</sup> D. Osborne, 'Five More Prostitution Busts Ided in Chelsea Video Store', *Gay City News*, (Jan. 23 - Feb. 05, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> D. Osborne, 'Questionable Prostitution Charges Rock Video Stores', *Gay City News*, (Dec. 4-10, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> P. Schindler, 'Mobilizing over False Arrests', *Gay City News*, (Jan. 23 - Feb. 05, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> D. Osborne, 'Leader in the Fight against Bogus Busts at Porn Stores Is Vindicated', *The Villager*, (July 1-7, 2009); L. Celona, 'Kelly Curbs 'Gay' Stings', *New York Post*, (Mar. 9, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> D. Osborne, 'City Pays out \$450,000 for Porn Shop False Arrest', *The Villager*, (May 1, 2014).

Material also emerged that suggested that the Mayor's office itself had been "actively involved" in the operation. Evidence was handed over that showed that a call was made on the morning of Pinter's arrest from an "unidentified staffer" at Bloomberg's office to the police department to "go to The Blue Door and arrest someone".<sup>19</sup>

It was clear that the NYPD and city government arrested gay men as part of a concerted effort to close adult video shops, citing "taxpayer complaints" about prostitution in their vicinity.<sup>20</sup> These complaints had surfaced years earlier from the campaign against the shops. In 2004, Bloomberg had hosted a widely reported community meeting, at which he was reportedly "pelted" with complaints about the "proliferation of video stores with lewd windows".<sup>21</sup> However, both the city government and NYPD denied that the operation was specifically targeted at gay men. This was despite the fact that only male undercover officers approached male customers, as testified by the reports.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the operation was described in articles from community figures as a clear attempt to criminalize gay sexual behaviour in the city.<sup>23</sup>

Pinter's arrest shows that literature on the criminalisation of existing populations in gentrifying neighbourhoods has not given sufficient attention to the LGBT community. The NYPD's facilitation of gentrification, either directly or indirectly, did not start with its effort to close these stores. For example, Pinter described how he had not felt confident to venture east of Avenue A in the East Village, at that time the ungentrified section of the neighbourhood, until a police station had opened on Avenue C, two blocks east of his apartment. However, his arrest raises questions about the extent to which the LGBT community was seen both as enemy and easy target of the city government in its pro-gentrification policies. Despite the years of successes of the gay liberation movement, the NYPD seemed to have no issue with targeting gay men in such a concerted way. To take such aggressive action against a specific community justifiably raised questions

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<sup>19</sup> D. Osborne, 'City Law Department Says Mayor's Office Ordered Porn Busts', *Chelsea Now*, (May 1, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> C. Hauser, 'Among Gay Men, Arrests Spark Concern About Being Singled Out', *New York Times*, (Feb. 14, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Steinhauer, 'In the Village'.

<sup>22</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'; Hauser, 'Among Gay Men'; Celona, 'Kelly Curbs 'Gay' Stings'.

<sup>23</sup> Humm, 'Police Charged'; Schindler, 'Mobilizing over False Arrests'.

about whether the department had changed all that much since Stonewall nearly forty years prior.<sup>24</sup> It thus displays that despite the progress the community has made, and the role it has played in gentrification in New York, its position remains vulnerable.

### The LGBT Community and Wider Gentrification in New York

In addition to the alarming case of the spate of arrests around adult video stores in which he was embroiled, Pinter has been affected by gentrification in ways that many other residents in neighbourhoods in Manhattan would recognise. As a beneficiary of rent stabilisation laws in Manhattan, Pinter's rent has remained at what he estimates to be less than a quarter of the market rate for apartments in his building in the heart of the East Village.<sup>25</sup> However, in recent years, the owner of Pinter's building, Steven Croman, has become notorious as one of New York City's "worst landlords". In particular, he has become known for his aggressive attempts to remove rent-controlled and rent-stabilised tenants from his buildings, in order to remove restrictions on the rents he can charge. His practices have even been criticised in a *New York Times* editorial.<sup>26</sup>

Croman would often offer buyouts as low as \$10,000 to tenants, derisory sums in comparison to the earning potential of their apartments.<sup>27</sup> If the offers were rejected, he would employ a "tenant relocation specialist", in Pinter's words, a "thug" to force them out by harassing them and their families. Other techniques included using renovations and construction work in the vacated apartments in his buildings in an attempt, according by Pinter and other tenants, to force them to vacate the building. One tenant reported their ceiling caving in four times, and Pinter claimed to have developed "bronchial asthma" as a result of the dust brought up by the extensive work, a medical issue he had never previously had.<sup>28</sup> Pinter and his fellow tenants formed a group to oppose these activities and filed suit against Croman. As a result, Croman's e-mails were

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<sup>24</sup> Hauser, 'Among Gay Men'.

<sup>25</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>26</sup> K. Barker and J. Silver-Greenberg, 'Regular on New York's 'Worst Landlords' Lists Is Charged', *New York Times*, (May 09, 2016); Editorial, 'Tenants Vs. Landlords from Hell', *New York Times*, (May 17, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Z. Williams, 'E. Eighth St. Tenants Are Suing Croman over "Harassment"', *The Villager*, (August 21 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Williams, 'E. Eighth St. Tenants'; Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

subpoenaed, that produced evidence that led to a conviction for mortgage fraud; the civil suit is on going.<sup>29</sup>

Such strategies are not unique. Jimmy Wright, a gay man who has lived in the East Village since 1976, also has similar experiences of harassment as developers have sought to get him to leave his property to aid their construction of a new luxury hotel. Despite the fact that Wright owns his home, he has not escaped the treatment Pinter faced in his rented flat. Developers purchased land near his home, looking to building a luxury hotel there. They hoped to use his street as the access point for the building, in order to have an entrance away from the nearby main street known for its homeless population. Due to his rights over the land that is required for this, he claims to have been harassed by the company as they seek to push him out. Much like Pinter, Wright reports the use of construction practices being used with that aim, and describes the leader of the developers of the building as “aggressive” in his interactions with him. Despite this, like Pinter, Wright has successfully remained, and looks to continue to do so.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding these examples, developers generally have been successful in achieving their aims across the neighbourhood. Pinter describes how at one time he knew everyone who lived in the seventeen units in his building, but now increasing numbers of students and “high-tech professionals” have moved in, and just “seven of us” remain.<sup>31</sup> Pinter recounts a story in which a new tenant allowed the front door of the building to slam shut in front of him as he was coming back from the supermarket with his hands full of groceries. While such an event is not necessarily particularly eye-catching, to him this experience “epitomises the change” that the building has undergone in recent years.<sup>32</sup> Pinter has had some truly traumatic experiences directly as a result of efforts to accelerate gentrification in the neighbourhood. Thus, it is striking that he mentions such an everyday inconvenience when talking about the negative impacts gentrification has had in recent years. This shows that even for those for

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<sup>29</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'; S. Maslin Nir, 'Notorious Landlord Is Sentenced to a Year in Jail', *New York Times*, (Oct. 03, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Wright, 'Jimmy Wright'.

<sup>31</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>32</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

whom gentrification can mean wrongful arrest and imprisonment, as well as harassment and health problems, simple changes in everyday experiences such as entering their building can be as impactful on their perceptions of life in the city as the repressive tactics deployed by the NYPD.

In many ways, Pinter and Wright both exemplify the classic ‘first-wave gentrifier’, and their experiences give credence to the stage model theory of gentrification, especially to claims that the model is particularly apt for LGBT communities.<sup>33</sup> This is not to say that the gentrification of the East Village occurred in a wholly linear fashion, but in the cases of both men, their cultural and social participation in the neighbourhood contributed to what makes it so appealing to developers and landlords like Croman. An article in *The Villager* betrays a similar position within the process, in bemoaning the changes that the “East Village” has undergone in recent years. They resemble brownstoners campaigning for “gentrifiers” to “keep out of Boerum Hill”, a name Osman has shown to originate in the earlier stages of the gentrification of the neighbourhood.<sup>34</sup>

However, when it comes to gentrification, an oft-overlooked negative consequence is exactly the kind of story that Pinter recounts about the door slam. As Mark Davidson argued in 2009, much of the academic literature on gentrification has focused on measuring the most tangible consequence: “displacement”.<sup>35</sup> The term is most often used to describe the physical dislocation of working-class residents by escalating property values in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, that formed part of Ruth Glass’s original definition of the term.<sup>36</sup> Many articles have attempted to measure the extent to which poor residents have been forced to move out of such neighbourhoods, and the issue is not yet settled in the literature.<sup>37</sup> Such a phenomenon is of course a significant consequence of gentrification, and the

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<sup>33</sup> Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, pp. 31-34; Hackworth and Smith, ‘Changing State of Gentrification’, pp. 466-68; Clay, ‘Mature Revitalized Neighborhood’, p. 37; Lauria and Knopp, ‘Toward an Analysis’, p. 161.

<sup>34</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> Davidson, ‘Displacement, Space and Dwelling’, p. 220.

<sup>36</sup> Glass, *London*, pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>37</sup> Freeman and Braconi, ‘Gentrification and Displacement’; Newman and Wyly, ‘Right to Stay Put, Revisited’; Vigdor, ‘Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?’; C. Hamnett, ‘Gentrification and the Middle-Class Remaking of Inner London, 1961–2001’, *Urban Studies*, 40 (2003).



discussion of its extent and intensity in gentrifying neighbourhoods is warranted. However, Davidson made an important contribution when he stated a desire to bring the concept of “place” back into a debate that had become dominated by questions of “space”. In short, the idea that even for those who remain, displacement can occur as a neighbourhood is changed to an extent where it no longer seems to be ‘for’ them.<sup>38</sup>

One of the key aspects of the gentrification of the East Village, as noted earlier, has been the effort to make the neighbourhood ‘safer’ over a number of years. As has been shown, an important early driver of this was the LGBT community in the neighbourhood, as it sought to increase the visibility and safety of the community through a range of grassroots activism and the successes of the Wigstock festival. In 2003, this was accentuated when a smaller version of Wigstock was revived as part of *Howl!*, a festival held in Tompkins Square Park, that sought to celebrate various aspects of the East Village’s artistic history. It was named in honour of the poem written by Allen Ginsburg, a famed resident of the East Village.<sup>39</sup> One enthusiastic write-up in *The Villager* declared the festival to have been a “great success”. Much of the reviewer’s reasoning for this seemed to be as much due to how “amazingly clean” the park was after the three-day event. Comparing it to the festivals of the early nineties “marred by young anarchist punks”, he praised the “non-drug using” crowd of whom “many were from outside the neighbourhood”.<sup>40</sup> Of course, a festival passing without violence or significant damage to a local park is not necessarily an adverse outcome. However, the account seems to document a somewhat sanitised event, and in mentioning the numbers from outside the local area suggests that long-term East Village residents did not compare the festival favourably to previous incarnations.

Such descriptions are striking when compared with comments by Lady Bunny, the founder of Wigstock, on the state of New York City in 2014. They noted that the city was indeed “safer” now, and that LGBT people were at less risk walking down the street than ever. They did, however, state a fear that it

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<sup>38</sup> Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling'.

<sup>39</sup> L. Graeber, 'Family Fare', *New York Times*, (August 20, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> L. Anderson, 'The United State of the Arts: First Howl! Festival a Success', *The Villager*, (Aug. 27 - Sept. 02, 2003).

was “almost a little too safe”. Earlier in the interview, Lady Bunny had described changes in the culture of the LGBT community in the city, claiming that it was increasingly “assimilating into straight culture”. Although they said that they had no problem with “younger gays” being more comfortable in straight bars, they said it was not something that appealed to them: “I don’t want their culture”. In this context, the fear of it being “too safe” certainly does not mean that Lady Bunny felt that more anti-gay violence in the city would be a positive development. Instead, they drew attention to the important changes that LGBT neighbourhoods were undergoing, and the impact this could have on the radical gay politics and culture that had historically been nurtured by these neighbourhoods.<sup>41</sup>

Similar sentiments can be found more contemporaneously to the article on the first *Howl!* festival. In 2004, an article was written by someone under the name “Wilson” in *The Villager*, that lamented the fact that the East Village was “not so gay today”. Admitting their potential “naivety” for doing so they talked of how they missed the East Village of the early 80s. Rather than the vibrancy of the remembered past, the East Village was painted as “no way gay, very unfun... a sea of single heterosexuals on cell phones... and tourists/out-of-towners... taking up space”. To the author of the article, the only thing that remained “both gay and fun” was the pride parade, that they described “accidentally” attending, and being amazed to be “happy. Gay!!!”.<sup>42</sup> Pinter also said of the East Village it had become “so watered down... we could be in Kansas City”. To him, lost is the “zaniness” and experience of “living outside the norm” that the East Village once offered, replaced by people in “jeans and T shirts”.<sup>43</sup> The description of the neighbourhood is reminiscent of Wilson’s, focusing on the loss of the mystical past “energy” of previous years.<sup>44</sup> Thus, although Pinter is able to stay, his experience of the neighbourhood has been affected significantly by its increasingly gentrified state. As such, despite having lived in the same apartment in the East Village for over thirty-five years, Pinter cannot be said to have avoided a form of displacement as a result of gentrification.

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<sup>41</sup> S. Stiffler, 'Wig on, Gloves Off', *The Villager*, (June 26, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, 'Compared to Early '80s, It's Not So Gay Today', *The Villager*, (June 23-29, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>44</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

The experience of gentrification leading to a “shifted sense of place and belonging” has been noted in studies on other gentrifying areas of New York.<sup>45</sup> Chiara Valli, in her study of Bushwick, Brooklyn, found that many long-term residents had negative views and experiences of gentrification even in cases where they were able to stay. She found a sense amongst residents that “newcomers” had different social and cultural norms that clashed with their own. As a result, interviewees reported feeling “different” when walking and living in the neighbourhood.<sup>46</sup> Lance Freeman found similar sentiments when he interviewed residents in Clinton Hill and Harlem, historically black neighbourhoods that have begun to gentrify in recent years. He reported that many residents were pleased about a new feeling of safety in their neighbourhoods, as well as the benefits of high-quality shopping amenities.<sup>47</sup> However, Freeman also noted that alongside this interpretation, there were significant numbers of people that reported negative consequences for their experience of the respective neighbourhoods. He found similar sentiments to those in found in Valli’s study: the idea that new amenities were not “for” them, and the feeling of being more “policed” than previously, on account of the NYPD looking to protect the newer, often white residents.<sup>48</sup> The issues with policing present in Freeman’s work are especially worth consideration when discussing gentrification in LGBT neighbourhoods, due to the long and complicated relationship the community has with the NYPD.

In neighbourhoods in which LGBT communities have historically grown and developed, changes are becoming more evident. Given the relevance of such neighbourhoods to the history of the gay liberation movement, these can be as significant and damaging as physical dislocation. Neil Smith elucidated the potential political consequences of gentrification in his description of the “revanchist city”. Characterising gentrification as a “major *political* strategy”, Smith saw city government involvement in gentrification as a means to repress political movements that threatened a conservative ideological consensus. In

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<sup>45</sup> Valli, 'Sense of Displacement', p. 1202.

<sup>46</sup> Valli, 'Sense of Displacement', pp. 1199-202.

<sup>47</sup> Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, pp. 60-67.

<sup>48</sup> Valli, 'Sense of Displacement', p. 1199; Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, pp. 84-87.

New York this, to Smith, was most prominently displayed by the eviction of the homeless and squatters in the Lower East Side in the early 90s.<sup>49</sup>

Within the gay community, the period from the early 90s up to the present has been marked by changes in LGBT rights activism alongside gentrification. Termed by Mariano Croce as a move from “the street to the court”, issues like same-sex marriage and the right to join the military became leading causes for gay rights activists ahead of more radical liberation politics.<sup>50</sup> For some, most noticeably in those who have lived in the East Village, this has been received as a negative development. “Wilson” hinted this in the *Villager* article, asserting that they could not imagine any of the people they had known from the Pyramid Club, the East Village nightclub, getting married.<sup>51</sup> Robert Pinter further elucidated the somewhat negative view towards gay marriage, describing the movement for marriage as “retrograde and conservative”. For Pinter, the gay liberation movement was of more significance as a radical movement that sought a “deep questioning of gender roles” rather than “getting married, or joining the military”.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Lady Bunny’s statement that “I don’t want their culture” seems to represent more than just a dislike of straight bars and clubs by some older members of the community.<sup>53</sup>

Sarah Schulman explicitly pointed to the connection between this shift in the gay rights movement and gentrification. Her work argues that the gentrification of areas of the cities involves the removal of “points of view” as well as various demographics from neighbourhoods, and results in a “gentrification of the mind”.<sup>54</sup> The book, described as a “personal intellectual memoir”, recounts Schulman’s experiences of gentrification in the city since the AIDS crisis to the present, along with her own analysis of that history. She argues that gentrification is wrongly “blamed on gay people”, instead of those “who caused their mass deaths”. By this, Schulman means the city and national government, whose response to the AIDS crisis was, to her, at best inadequate.

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, *New Urban Frontier*, pp. 46-47 [Emphasis in original].

<sup>50</sup> M. Croce, 'From Gay Liberation to Marriage Equality: A Political Lesson to Be Learnt', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 17 (2015), p. 281.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, 'Compared to Early '80s'.

<sup>52</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>53</sup> Stiffler, 'Wig On'.

<sup>54</sup> Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, p. 14.

She argued that gentrification occurred when wealthy “heterosexuals and then movie stars” moved into formerly rent-stabilised apartments vacated by those who died of AIDS in the late eighties and early nineties.<sup>55</sup> The outcome, argued Schulman, was the transformation of the liberation movement from “radical direct action” to “assimilation”.<sup>56</sup> To her, the shift was exacerbated by an attempt to make the LGBT community, given new visibility by the coverage of the AIDS crisis, seem less threatening to “the dominant group”. This meant drowning out and sidelining the community leaders who led the radical liberation movements. Schulman claimed “homosexuals with whom [straight society] were comfortable” replaced radical voices from the community. The voices that were newly promoted were those that advocated for more assimilationist policies, like equal marriage and admittance to the military.<sup>57</sup> Schulman’s argument is forceful in its position, and is a clear elucidation of the fears that can grow amongst groups, like the LGBT community, as they feel increasingly alienated from neighbourhoods from which they once drew strength.

#### Splits within ‘The Community’

This study has explored the development of three different LGBT communities in three separate neighbourhoods in New York with noticeable dissimilarities. These differences highlight the importance of remembering the diversity of the community when assessing its role in gentrification, and the effect of LGBT neighbourhoods on the gay liberation movement. It is equally important to remember this when discussing the impact of gentrification on the LGBT community. Schulman’s argument claims that a once unified, radical grassroots movement was gradually gentrified out of existence due to the AIDS crisis and the expansion of neighbourhood gentrification. However, her starting point was rarely, if ever, true. To Schulman, divisions within the community largely occurred as a result of these phenomena, but many of these divisions predate the AIDS crisis, and the accelerated pace of development in recent years. To speak of *the* ‘Gay’, ‘Lesbian and Gay’, or ‘LGBT’ community, even historically, is not always accurate. Gay men dominated most ‘community’ organisations. Although there

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<sup>55</sup> Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>56</sup> Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, p. 49.

<sup>57</sup> Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, pp. 115-16.

were transgender and lesbian people in the community during this era, these demographics rarely had the means, either economically or socially, to influence the city to the same extent.<sup>58</sup> Even the most active and powerful demographic rarely spoke with a unified voice. Even within the white gay community, there were regular disagreements between those who sought to emphasize the spending power of the relatively more affluent population, and those who argued that they should advocate for the more marginalised sections of the wider community.<sup>59</sup> This problematizes any blanket characterisations of a strong, unified community having been destroyed by the AIDS crisis or later expansions of gentrification, despite their obvious impacts, certainly in the devastating case of the former.

One particularly instructive example of this fragmentation can be found in the campaigns around the George Segal *Gay Liberation Monument* in Greenwich Village in the 80s and early 90s. As described in the first chapter, the statue was contested between large parts of the gay community and straight residents of the Village. However, it was perhaps in anticipation of this response that the statue was designed in such a way that it also alienated some of those it sought to represent. George Segal, the sculptor who designed and built the statue said that he wanted it to be “so innocuous that the mother pushing its baby past wouldn't be offended”.<sup>60</sup> As a result, the statue was criticised by many within the community. Craig Rodwell found it “frivolous”, and not sufficiently representative of the heroism that was displayed during Stonewall. He argued that the statue should have been more radical, as it was to commemorate a radical history. Indeed, the statue, which depicts a lesbian and a gay couple standing and sitting next to each other, bares little resemblance to many of the images of Stonewall, or subsequent direct action campaigning that formed the early gay liberation movement.<sup>61</sup> Further, and related to this criticism, were

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<sup>58</sup> Blotcher, 'Rolling Thunder', pp. 38-41, 52; O'Grady, 'Report on GLID'.

<sup>59</sup> The Advocate, 'Why Would a Gay Magazine'; C. Rodwell, 'Letter to George Whitmore', (May 06, 1982), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B3, F5: 1982 (B); M. O'Grady, 'Letter to David', (undated, LGBTQ NHA, Collection 127, Michael O'Grady Papers, B1, F14: Lower Manhattan Gay Neighbors, V.I.L.L.A.G.E.

<sup>60</sup> "Greenwich Village Is Not Amused".

<sup>61</sup> Truscott IV, 'Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square'; 'Angry Homosexuals Parade up 8th Ave', *New York Times*, (November 10, 1978).

disagreements with the process behind the commissioning of the straight Segal to design the sculpture without public consultation.<sup>62</sup>

There were also many criticisms that focused on the homogeneity of the subjects of the statue. The figures were all clad in white, leading to accusations that it gave insufficient recognition to the fact that the key instigators of Stonewall were people of colour.<sup>63</sup> Segal's answer to such criticism was that he had tried to find subjects to pose for his statue that would be more diverse, but had been unable to find any interracial couples willing to pose for him.<sup>64</sup> Rodwell, keen to emphasise the interracial characteristics of the LGBT community, declared that to approve a statue that depicted only white figures would be "unconscionable".<sup>65</sup> In the end, most members of the LGBT population in the area were happy to compromise. Various arguments were made to justify it. Some backed it on the basis that it represented "a start", in a society in which "visibility" was the priority.<sup>66</sup> For some who moved from opposition to support, this argument was made even more salient by the AIDS crisis, which was at its height at the time it was installed in 1992.<sup>67</sup> There were, of course, more enthusiastic backers that described it in comparison with the bridge in Selma to the African-American community, as a physical monument in a location in which the collective memories of the liberation movement were bound.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, Rodwell in particular remained vocally opposed. When the statue was finally installed in the park in 1992, he remained as firmly against it as ever, describing the lack of representation in the statue for people of colour as "vulgar".<sup>69</sup> In later years it was described by Christopher Reed rather unflatteringly as an "unwitting parody of mainstream perceptions of a prequeer lesbian and gay movement".<sup>70</sup> In 2015, this criticism was taken a step further

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<sup>62</sup> Rodwell, 'Some Objections to the Segal "Gay Liberation" Statue'. B. Eves and J. Hammond, 'Letter to Anthony Desposito', (September, 1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F11: Christopher Park Statues Controversy, 1980-1981.

<sup>63</sup> O'Grady, 'Why Some Gays'; Rodwell, 'Some Objections to the Segal "Gay Liberation" Statue'; Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>64</sup> Shehadi, 'Community Board Approves'.

<sup>65</sup> Rodwell, 'Some Objections to the Segal "Gay Liberation" Statue'.

<sup>66</sup> V. Jordan, 'Letter to Craig Rodwell', (September, 1980), M&A Div., NYPL, Craig Rodwell Papers, B4, F11: Christopher Park Statues Controversy, 1980-1981; Pickett, 'Gay Sculpture Controversy'.

<sup>67</sup> Kurtz, 'Gay Liberation Statue Set for Installation'.

<sup>68</sup> Peters, 'Koch Supports Notion'.

<sup>69</sup> Vogel, 'Art Market'.

<sup>70</sup> Reed, 'Imminent Domain', p. 65.

when activists engaged in direct action. The statue was “rectified” by two gender non-conforming women who painted the faces and hands of the male statues black and put wigs on their heads, with a sign captioning the protest reading “Black Latina trans women led the riots, stop the whitewashing”.<sup>71</sup> In an interview, they described the statue as a “slap across the face” to the history of Stonewall, and the “Black and Latina trans women” that had started the uprising.<sup>72</sup>

### Conclusion

Such divisions within communities are of course not uncommon. Both Freeman and Monique Taylor, in her study about gentrification in Harlem, analyse the conflicts that occurred within the community as “black gentrifiers” have moved in. The process has long been associated with white in-migration, especially in the older literature, and still today amongst many residents of these neighbourhoods.<sup>73</sup> Taylor and Freeman found that there have been considerable numbers of middle-class African Americans who have moved to Harlem, often inspired by the history of the neighbourhood, and sought to “return” to the neighbourhood.<sup>74</sup> In the LGBT experience, such divisions have existed throughout its history in New York. As has been shown, these differences directly led to the growth of the communities in neighbourhoods outside Greenwich Village with differing cultural and social identities. Ultimately however, it is still worthwhile to explore the ways in which LGBT people have experienced gentrification, in an attempt to understand the impact gentrification has had at a community level, as Taylor and Freeman showed with Harlem.

The community has not always been homogenous or unified. However, many of the experiences are specific to LGBT people. Robert Pinter was not a politically active man in his life in the East Village in the 80s and 90s, attending

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<sup>71</sup> B. Browning, 'Vandals Paint Stonewall Statues to Protest 'Whitewashing'', *The Advocate*, (August 19, 2015).

<sup>72</sup> Audrey, 'Anonymous Activists Just Painted the Stonewall Statues Brown for Miss Major', *Autostraddle.com*, (August 18, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Schaffer and Smith, 'Gentrification of Harlem', p. 347; K. Daniels, 'Interview with Kenneth Daniels', int. by A. Brown, NYPL Community Oral History Project, A People's History of Harlem: A Harlem Neighborhood Oral History Project, (August 20, 2014).

<sup>74</sup> Taylor, *Harlem*, p. xi; Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, p. 87.



only the occasional march.<sup>75</sup> However, his arrest was directly related to his sexuality, and something that could have happened regardless of his views on the *Gay Liberation Monument* in Greenwich Village for example. Pinter is thus emblematic of this shift in gentrification, and the impact of that on LGBT people. The involvement of the community in gentrification encompassed those, like Sarah Schulman, who were deeply committed to the gay liberation movement, and by people like Pinter whose contribution was based more on his participation in the social and cultural life of the East Village. This chapter has shown that Pinter has been deeply affected by the gentrification of the East Village, as has Schulman. Although people from many demographics have faced changing neighbourhoods and harassment from landlords, such experiences have been shown to be more significant for LGBT people than others. The perceived loss of the East Village to 'heterosexuals' has undoubtedly had an impact on Pinter's life in the neighbourhood. Likewise, Schulman clearly felt the movement has experienced severe damage from the changes to the landscape of Greenwich Village and other LGBT neighbourhoods in the city.

These case studies are vital additions to the on-going debates about the consequences and meaning of gentrification. They illuminate that the process has the power to fundamentally alter the lived experience of the city, and the conception of places of significance to residents and communities alike. This can result in displacement from areas in which residents have lived for over thirty years. Pinter's case shows that this displacement can occur with or without spatial dislocation, as Davidson postulated.<sup>76</sup> In his case, Pinter has remained in place while the 'community' around him was instead culturally and socially displaced by new structures. Correspondingly, Schulman's radical vision of LGBT politics has been replaced by new ones of which she is deeply distrustful. For the community, gentrification thus will continue to be meaningful as it impacts neighbourhoods and communities that have historically been refuges for LGBT people, and been central in the fight against discrimination and violence.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Pinter, 'Robert Pinter'.

<sup>76</sup> Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling', p. 225.

<sup>77</sup> The Associated Press, 'FBI Report Shows 17 Percent Spike in Hate Crimes in 2017', *New York Times*, (November 13, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

In the last half-century, the LGBT community, and its position in society, has changed radically: from an essentially criminalised existence to a state in which many members of the community are now able to exist safely. Although homophobia remains a serious issue in New York and America more widely, the gains that have been made are significant when considering the starting point in 1969. These gains have been facilitated by the growth and development of concentrated LGBT communities in urban neighbourhoods across the U.S. This study has shown that New York City was the site of a number of such communities in Greenwich Village, the East Village, and Park Slope. They played host to the growth of LGBT populations with different characteristics. Greenwich Village is the most well-known example. It formed the political centre of the community in the years after Stonewall and became, after the Castro in San Francisco, the most well-known gay neighbourhood in the United States. The East Village and Park Slope communities came to occupy space on either side of Greenwich Village, as the more radical and more conventional neighbourhoods respectively. They served as more accepting neighbourhoods for groups often marginalised in the Greenwich Village, which was dominated by gay men.

This study has demonstrated through these three case studies that LGBT involvement in gentrification has come from every section of the community, and is not limited to gay men. Castells' and Murphy's research remains significant as the first major study to systemically analyse the role of gay communities in gentrification. However, lesbian and transgender involvement has been significant, and Castells' claim that gay men played the most important role due to an inherent territorialism has been shown to have little relevance now, if it ever did.<sup>1</sup> The LGBT community is a diverse group, and this diversity directly led to communities forming in varying places with diverging characteristics. There are, however, commonalities outlined that render the study of the group as a whole vital. Each community contributed to the formation of social and political networks and cultural identities that were invaluable in the movement for rights and liberation both locally and nationwide.

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<sup>1</sup> Castells and Murphy, 'Cultural Identity', p. 238; Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, pp. 140, 70.

A consequence of the development of these communities in New York was the gentrification of these same neighbourhoods. LGBT populations displayed an interest in community and local politics that supplemented their campaigning for gay rights at a local and national level. Participation in community block associations contributed to the movement to “clean up” neighbourhoods that feature strongly in many accounts of early-stage gentrification. This study has shown that in the debate between structural arguments and those that stress the agency of gentrifying groups, neither sufficiently explains the process on its own. The early stages of gentrification in LGBT neighbourhoods was led from below, as a disenfranchised group developed with little help from the establishment in areas across the city. Local political campaigning and the fostering of communities often occurred in opposition to homophobia on the part of the city government and NYPD. However, in later years the changes in the neighbourhoods accelerated the growth of the process beyond the control of the LGBT population, as shown by the example of Jimmy Wright in the East Village. As an individual who acted without the support of the state for much of his time in the area, it now vulnerable to the consequences of the process he and his community helped to start in his neighbourhood.

This intensification represents a significant threat to LGBT populations in Greenwich Village, the East Village and Park Slope. On the intensification of gentrification in Harlem, Lance Freeman noted the neighbourhood’s importance for the black community as the “physical manifestation of the ‘New Negro’” in the early twentieth century. If the neighbourhood that served as a symbolic centre for the African-American community at a time of intense racism was to significantly gentrify, the consequences for black people living in the area and elsewhere are potentially significant.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the consequences for the national LGBT community need to be considered when analysing LGBT-associated neighbourhoods in New York.

The study reveals that gentrification’s expansion threatens LGBT people with displacement, both spatially and socially. It is clear that in the case of the community, much like the black community in Harlem, gentrification represents

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<sup>2</sup> Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, pp. 21, 29.

more than just a spatial threat. The loss of the sense of place, as described by Pinter in the East Village, reiterates Davidson's formulation of the possibility of displacement without spatial dislocation.<sup>3</sup> Simply constructing arguments against gentrification for the possibility of direct displacement is to misunderstand the significance of the process.<sup>4</sup> Even if long-term residents are able to remain spatially, Pinter's statement that the East Village may as well be "Kansas City" shows that to him, the place that he once lived in is no more. If what made the 'place' special and significant has gone, continued residence in the same space does not mean that one has not been displaced. This is significant in the East Village and Park Slope, but nowhere more so than Greenwich Village, which is the famed location of the "Queer Bastille Day": Stonewall.<sup>5</sup>

Pinter's interview evidences that in the study of gentrification, the voices of those affected are vital in assessing the impact and experience of the process. Osman dismissed the value of oral histories due to them often being "tainted by nostalgia", but this study shows that they are indispensable in assessing the effect of gentrification on the lived experience of neighbourhoods.<sup>6</sup> A systematic oral history of the process, similar to that conducted by Freeman in Harlem, would be to further interrogate the issues raised by this study.<sup>7</sup> The LGBT population has impacted the gentrification of neighbourhoods in New York City in a historically specific way. It created neighbourhoods with a special significance for the community in a period in which it fought severe discrimination and oppression. The development of LGBT neighbourhoods gave the community strength and safety at a crucial time in its history, and had a profound impact on its ability to secure greater rights and power more widely. Gentrification now threatens these very areas, and it is imperative that its impact on the lived experience of LGBT people is further investigated.

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<sup>3</sup> Davidson, 'Displacement, Space and Dwelling', p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> Freeman and Braconi, 'Gentrification and Displacement'.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, 'Compared to Early '80s'.

<sup>6</sup> Osman, *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*.

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